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To Rev Wm Silsbee

From his friend
Theophilus Parsons

Feb 13, 1873

WORDS IN SEASON.

49913

WORDS IN SEASON:

A MANUAL OF

Instruction, Comfort, and Devotion,

FOR

FAMILY READING AND PRIVATE USE.

BY

HENRY B. BROWNING, M.A.,

RECTOR OF ST. GEORGE WITH ST. PAUL, STAMFORD.

"And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."—*Zech.* xiv. 9.

REV. D. BLAUSTEIN

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PREFACE.

It will probably not be long before the various controversies which now distract the Christian world will in great measure be merged in the one general fundamental inquiry, "*What think ye of Christ?*" "Is He a mere man?" "Is He the incarnation of a part only of the Deity?" Or, "Is He the One living and true God in all His infinite fulness of Love, Wisdom, and Power, in a glorified humanity?" How this inquiry may be answered, so that the doctrine concerning the Lord shall be the pivotal truth of a theology agreeable to the literal sense of the written Word, and satisfying at once to the intellect and to the heart, has been the writer's endeavour to show.

There can be no doubt, in the minds of unprejudiced inquirers, that much of the teaching of the church of Rome is not unmixed falsity, but rather a perversion of the truth; and that the effect of the Protestant movement was in some cases to root up the wheat of Catholic verities along with the tares of false doctrine with which it was intermixed. We have an example of this in the Romish doctrine of purgatory which was uprooted by the reformers with such unsparing hands that the true doctrine of an intermediate state, of which it is the perversion,

has been well-nigh lost. Those who indulge in indiscriminate condemnation of all Romish tenets, would do well to remember—that destruction is not reformation, and that erroneous doctrinal systems have often been raised on a substratum of Divine truth. In the chapter on "Judgment after death," the doctrine of an intermediate world of spirits is stated in the form which is now believed by many to be most agreeable to the known laws of man's spiritual nature and the teaching of the Word of God.

That these expositions and prayers, so far as they are in accordance with Divine Truth, may be instrumental in establishing the Lord's kingdom in the hearts and minds and lives of those who read, is the writer's earnest prayer.

Stamford, 1870.

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WORDS IN SEASON.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—*Psalm* cxxxix. 23, 24.

THE purpose for which God has given His word to men is, firstly, that they might know God; and, secondly, that they might know themselves.

The value of self-knowledge cannot be overrated. Only as we know ourselves can we learn to know and appreciate the mercies of God. Unless we know how sinful we are, we can never desire to repent. Until we realize in our own experience what an evil and bitter thing is sin, how it corrupts the soul, how it turns us away from God and all goodness, how it makes us fain to satisfy our hunger with the husks that the swine do eat, we shall never wish to arise and go to our Father. Unless we know our own deep heart wants, we can never realize the blessedness of having those wants supplied. Every grace of meekness, of godly sorrow, of humility, and of spiritual hunger, implies self-knowledge. We become meek when we

know how prone we are to folly; when we see ourselves poor and blind and naked in spiritual things; when we realize how continually we need to depend on the saving help of God. We mourn when we know how our transgressions have separated us from God, robbed us of our inheritance, disturbed our peace, and marred our joy. We become humble in knowing how weak and erring and unworthy we are. We hunger and thirst after righteousness, when we know how much we need to be guided by Him who is "*the Way*," to be taught by Him who is "*the Truth*," to be sustained by Him who is "*the Life!*" The blessings promised to the meek and to the mourners, to the humble and to the hungry, are thus dependent on our knowledge of ourselves. "*Give me a wise and understanding heart*," should therefore be the prayer of every one.

To know ourselves needs self-examination. We ought not to be satisfied with a merely general confession of our follies and failings, of our sins of omission and commission, of our faults of temper, of speech, of actions. We ought to look thoroughly into ourselves, and learn the very sin we have committed, the very law we have broken, the very fault of which we have been guilty. We ought to pray for the pardon of *that* sin; to watch ourselves lest we fall again into the commission of *that* sin; to beseech help from the Lord, so that we may overcome *that* precise evil.

The duty of self-examination is enjoined in this prayer of David. It does not merely mean that we wish God to search us and know our hearts, to try us and know our thoughts, to see if there be any wicked way in us. God knows this already, without our asking Him. His sleepless eyes see our inmost feelings; He knows our most secret thoughts; we cannot hide ourselves from Him. The wings of the morning cannot carry us beyond His knowledge. To Him the darkness is as the light. Neither the uttermost parts of the earth, nor even hell can conceal us from His Spirit. He knoweth our down-sitting and our uprising. Like an open book, all that we feel and think and say or do lies before Him. The most solemn thought that can come to us when about to sin is this—"*Thou God seest me!*"

The prayer means that God would enable us so to search our hearts that we, too, may see ourselves as He sees us, and know ourselves to be that which He knows us to be. This means that we wish to see ourselves in heavenly light, that all self-delusion should be banished from us. Unhappy is that man who is like the Laodiceans of whom the Lord spake:—"*Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*" (Rev. iii. 17.)

Viewed in this light, the text is very important

and wonderfully comprehensive. It asks for a searching of the *heart*—all our desires, dispositions, affections, inclinations, to be laid open before us. Happy is the man who knows the infirmities of his own heart, and who is thereby led to watch against the first approaches of evil, ever bearing in mind the injunction of the wise man, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*" (Prov. iv. 23).

The prayer asks for a trying of the *thoughts*. Impure and evil thoughts come to us from wicked spirits, and sometimes we cannot prevent them. We are not guilty if their presence troubles us, and if we resist them as temptations of the evil one. But if we foster them, turn them about in our minds, take pleasure in thinking them, and wish to carry them out into practice, then alas! the temptation is only too successful, and we fall into sin. We need then to pray earnestly for help to "*resist the devil,*" that he may flee from us. It shows us that we are not altogether clean, that we are not yet beyond the reach of evil. This we shall never be until we find our refuge in heaven, "*where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.*"

The prayer asks to see if there be "*any wicked way*" in us. Sins of act are evil desires carried out and completed. They are more grievous than sins of feeling and sins of thought. *They confirm*

the evil states of will and mind. They often inflict injury on others as well as on ourselves. Some of those injuries cannot be wiped away by repentance; just as no remorse and no contrition on the part of a murderer can bring his victim to life. Prevent your wicked desires from becoming wicked deeds! *This is the first step upwards.* He who shuns an evil deed, and will not utter a wicked word, *because they are sins against God,* has begun to conquer evil and himself.

Thus the prayer includes the whole life of man—his desires, his thoughts, his deeds. First, his heart, because the root of all sin is there; secondly, his thoughts, because wicked lusts take form in wicked thoughts; thirdly, his conduct, for it is in this that wicked desires and thoughts are carried out. They who truly pray this prayer desire to know themselves within and without; they seek to shun evil in its origin and in its effects. Very impressive is the description by St. James of the beginning and the end of sin—"*Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*" (Jas. i. 14, 15).

The prayer ends with the petition—"*Lead me in the way everlasting.*" We seek to know our sins, to know our proneness to sin, our weakness, and our wants, and then the full heart cries to God—"*Lead me in the way everlasting.*" Our knowledge that

He alone can help us in our sinfulness and weakness, impels us to go to Him. And the sweet assurance is given to us—"*Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out*" (John vi. 37).

PRAYER.

O most merciful and all-seeing Lord Jesus Christ, Thou knowest our sinfulness and weakness, and our need of Thy mercy and grace. Thou hast been touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and having Thyself suffered, being tempted, Thou art able to succour them that are tempted. Thou wilt in no wise cast out those who come unto Thee. While we feel how poor and blind and naked we are, we can yet trust Thy loving-kindness; for we know that Thou art plenteous in mercy, full of compassion, and ever ready to forgive.

Help us, O Lord, to know our hearts, that in Thy light we may see our motives, dispositions, and desires. Enable us to hate the evil and to love the good. Turn out the strong man armed from within our hearts, and do Thou enter in and reign.

Help us to try our thoughts. Enable us to turn from all that is evil and unholy, and to meditate with pleasure on all that is good and peaceable and pure. Purge our minds, good Lord, and make them clean in Thy sight.

Keep our feet from falling, our mouths from speaking foolishness, our hands from doing wrong

Make us quick to discern whatever is contrary to Thy will, and enable us to resist and shun it.

Lead us in the way everlasting. Reveal to us more and more Thy will concerning us, and help us to take pleasure therein. Give us that deep knowledge of ourselves which will ever impel us to seek Thy help, and to cast all our care upon Thee. Thus glorify Thyself in us, that we also may glorify Thee, our ever adorable Saviour and Lord. *Amen.*

THE DIVINE SAVIOUR.

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins."—*Matt.* i. 21.

IF men were not sinners, there would be no need of a Saviour. Only the sick have need of a physician. Seeing how sin destroyed men, making them base and bad here, and fitting them only for misery hereafter, God took pity upon His creatures, and came into the world to save them. He came to save men from sin; not merely from the punishment which sin brings upon the sinner, but from sin itself. Wrong-doing must ever produce misery. To take away the misery, God must cleanse man from that which is the cause of it. This is what Jesus Christ is continually striving to do,—to make us happier by making us better. The love of doing evil is contrary to every purpose which God had in making man. It is a state of spiritual disease. Man cannot enjoy bodily comfort while his body is diseased; neither can he be truly happy while his soul is disordered. Jesus is the good Physician, because He came to heal our souls. He will save us from our sins.

Jesus is a *Divine* Saviour. It is a blessed

thought that He who created man came down from heaven in order that He might save man. None but the Almighty could make man, and none but the Almighty can make man a new creature. To fill the soul with light and joy, with peace and happiness, with contentment and good desires, needs an ability which is Divine. These blessings flow from a new life in the soul, and who can give life but God? Only He who gave life to Lazarus at first could restore life to Lazarus when dead. Just so is it with man's soul. It is "*dead in trespasses and sins*" (Eph. ii. 1). It has no good thing in it. To call it from its grave needs Divine power, and Jesus the life-giver is Jesus the Lord, "*the only wise God our Saviour*" (Jude 25).

Not only is Jesus *able* to save all who come to Him, He is also *willing* to save. He invites us to come: "*Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matt. xi. 28). When we feel that our life of sin is painful and hard, that the burden of our sins is heavy, that the troubles of our souls are more than we can bear, and we want a friend and comforter—then we need but to come to Jesus, and He will give us rest. This rest is deliverance from sin, and so from the disquietude and misery which are inseparable from sin. We can see how willing He is to save, when we consider that at the very time when men were perishing in their sins and would not go to God

for help, God came down to men in order that He might help them. He came to seek men when men would not seek Him; and when all were lost, He came into the world that He might save them. Can you conceive of greater willingness to save than this? A mother is willing to do anything to save her child, but the love of God towards His children is far greater than the love of mothers. God is all-loving; and love ever yearns to help and bless those who are beloved. The Lord teaches us this: "*Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee*" (Isa. xlix. 15). Even when the Jews had rejected Jesus, and would not have Him for their Saviour, He loved them so truly that He mourned over them, and said, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" (Matt. xxiii. 37.) How willing must He be to save, who, when His enemies had nailed Him to the cross, had no other wish concerning them than this: "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*" (Luke xxiii. 34). Jesus reveals the infinite love of God, and the infinite mercy of God, and that love and that mercy desire that all should come unto Him and be saved. If any are not saved, it is because they will not come.

All men need to be saved. What a blessed thing life would be if there were no evil in men's hearts. Earth would be like heaven if all men loved goodness, and delighted in doing good; if there were no crimes, no need for suspicion or fear; if each one sought the welfare of all; if there were no unkindness, harshness, and injustice; no selfishness, cruelty, and wrong; no cause for sorrow and no tears. Man was once in this condition. But evil has broken into the world, wicked desires are felt and worked out, bad passions rage and burn, every kind of sin is practised, and men show a fiendish cleverness in finding out new ways of wrong doing. Even the best men feel sad at the bad thoughts which sometimes come into their minds, at the wicked feelings which sometimes rise up in their hearts. They cry out with the apostle, "*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" (Rom. vii. 24.) Salvation is needed by all; the double salvation offered by Jesus Christ—salvation from sin here, and salvation from its consequences hereafter.

Salvation from sin implies a total change in the nature of man—a change from hating what is good to hating what is evil, from loving what is wrong to loving what is right. How then is this change to be wrought in man's soul? It is God, even the Lord Jesus Christ who saves: we cannot save ourselves. But even the Lord cannot save us from sin

and misery unless we are willing to be saved. The Jews were not saved because they would not come to Jesus that they might have life. And not only must we submit ourselves to the Lord's working in our souls, but we ourselves have something to do. Man's part in the great work of salvation is plainly shown in the Bible. *We have to believe that we are sinners needing salvation; we have to strive to shun everything that is evil, not merely because it is hurtful to ourselves, but because it is a sin against the Lord; we have to pray to the Lord Jesus for light and strength, that we may know what is contrary to His will, and that in every temptation we may be enabled to resist and overcome.* The prayer will be heard and answered: out of weakness we shall grow strong, out of darkness He will lead us into light. The grace may seem small at first, but we can "*grow in grace.*" Our knowledge and our peace may not at first seem much, but our knowledge will increase and our peace will deepen. We shall grow to be keener-sighted in detecting what is wrong; we shall grow more prayerful to Jesus to help us to shun what is wrong; and we shall not only be able, by the might of the Lord, to avoid sinful deeds, but He will also cleanse our hearts from sinful desires, and fill us with the love of all that is good, and with the joy that good alone can bring. Thus shall we find Him unto us a Saviour from our sins.

PRAYER.

O most merciful and loving Saviour, who dost desire that all men should come unto Thee and be saved; who dost ever hear the prayer of the humble, and dost hearken unto the cry of the penitent; who willest not the death of a sinner, but that all should turn unto Thee and live: we adore Thy boundless compassion, and implore Thy pardoning grace. We confess our sinfulness before Thee. With broken and contrite hearts we would approach Thy throne, trusting alone in Thy tenderness and power, knowing that Thou art willing to help, and able to save to the uttermost all who come unto Thee. Our wants impel us to come unto Thee, Lord Jesus, and Thy mercy bids us to hope. Save us from our sins, we beseech Thee. Cleanse our hearts from every evil wish. Purge our minds from every wicked thought. Let no evil obtain dominion over us. Help us to show forth Thy praise in all that we say and do. Thou hast Thyself suffered being tempted, and art able to succour them that are tempted; help, by Thy great power, all who approach unto Thee. While we are in the world, keep us unspotted from the world, and afterwards receive us unto life. All this we ask, O merciful Saviour, for thy loving-kindness' sake. *Amen*

THE PHYSICIAN OF SOULS.

"They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." —*Luke* v. 31, 32.

JUST as the body is subject to many diseases, so also is the soul. Just as the body in a diseased state needs a physician, so also a physician is needed to heal the disorders of the soul. There are many very striking analogies between the diseases to which the body is subject, and the diseases which afflict the souls of men.

Sometimes people have an appetite for things unfit for human food. This is called a depraved appetite; it indicates a state of disease. How many and how terrible are the depraved appetites of the soul! Every sin we desire to do, every wicked indulgence we crave to get, reveals to us one of these depraved appetites. The existence of so many of these depraved appetites shows how completely is the soul diseased.

Is there not a striking resemblance between a state of inflamed passions and a burning fever? There is an atrophy in which food ceases to nourish the body; there is also a deadness of heart in which spiritual food ceases to nourish the soul. There is a leprosy

without; and sin itself is a leprosy within. These similarities are not fanciful nor far-fetched. They must strike the mind of every one who thinks at all.

If we can see the truth of this idea, a glorious thought will follow it. Jesus Christ healed men's bodies of their various infirmities to show us that He, as the Physician of souls, will also heal our spiritual infirmities. Did He give sight to the blind? We are spiritually blind, and to Him must we go to obtain sight. Did He cleanse the lepers? We are suffering from the leprosy of sin, and He will cleanse all those who say to Him, "*Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.*" Did He give strength to the trembling limbs of the palsied? We, too, tremble and totter, powerless to make spiritual progress, and He will say to us, "*Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee. Arise, take up thy bed, and walk.*" Are we impotent to do good? He who healed the man by the pool of Bethesda, will also heal us. Is our spiritual strength wasting away, and have we in vain tried all sorts of remedies for this disease of the soul? He who said "*Go in peace,*" to the woman who had the issue of blood, will also heal us of our plague. Are we dead in trespasses and sins, so as even to be far gone in spiritual corruption? He who said, "*Lazarus, come forth,*" to him who had been dead four days, can and will call back to a new life the soul which seemed beyond all reach of hope.

If we can see the symbolism of disease, every miracle of healing which Jesus wrought becomes a promise of a parallel miracle which may be wrought by the Saviour in our souls. The miracles thus serve as so many illustrations of the Lord's statement that He is the Physician of souls.

The help of a physician is necessary only in a state of disease. "*They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.*" It was because men's spiritual diseases had reached their height that Jesus came to heal them. Just as a physician goes where the patients are when the patients cannot come to him, so God in Christ came down to earth when man was in such extremity that no other means could save. Think of this proof of God's infinite love. Because we were enemies, He came to reconcile us to Himself. Because we were diseased, He came to heal us. Because we were dead, He came that we might have life.

Spiritual disease is not merely sin as an occasional act, but sinfulness as an abiding state—sinful affections, sinful thoughts, sinful habits. It pervades all the powers and faculties of the soul: "*The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the head there is no soundness in it: but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores*" (Isa. i. 5, 6). In forming the souls of men, their Creator designed that they should love what is good, think what is true, do what is right.

Thus to love, think, and do, is to be in spiritual health, and the result is happiness and peace. All the misery, remorse, disquietude, and sorrow that are in the world only show how far men's souls are from a healthy state.

If we know what our disease is, we can see what will be the real nature of our recovery. Salvation from sin is what we need. Not only salvation from the habit of sinning, but from the very dispositions to commit sin. Salvation is derived from a Latin word which means *health*. It signifies the restoration of man to a state of spiritual health, the making whole of a soul now diseased and dying, the cleansing of a soul from that condition of uncleanness which is now its calamity and curse. This is what Jesus came to effect. Hence Jesus is the great Physician, willing and able to cleanse and heal our souls.

But before a sick man will consent to see a physician, or to go to him for aid, he must be convinced that he is really sick. We need, therefore, to be convinced of the diseased condition of our souls before we can wish to go to Jesus or for Jesus to come to us. Sin is so deceitful a thing that many prefer it to a state of spiritual health, just as many would rather be intoxicated than sober, or under the delusions of opium rather than controlled by reason. We must see that we are sinners, that sin is a diseased, hateful, and dangerous condition, be-

fore we shall be willing to go to Jesus, the merciful and loving Physician of our souls.

When a physician undertakes a case, he gives directions which the patient is expected carefully to observe: so with Jesus, who has given us instructions in His word, and requires us to obey them. The first thing which every wise physician directs is that the patient must leave off everything which fosters and aggravates the disease: so with Jesus, whose first direction to us is to cease from sin. The patient must have full confidence in the physician: so all our trust must be placed in Jesus, in His willingness and power to heal.

Thus repentance, *which consists in examining ourselves, and shunning everything that is evil because it is a sin against the Lord,* and faith, *which, in doing the work of repentance, continually looks to the Lord for direction and help,* are the joint conditions of our spiritual recovery. Even the great Physician of souls cannot heal those who will not follow His directions and look to Him for aid. The power of the Lord is ever present to heal, but it works effectually in those only who repent and believe in Him.

Those who thus go to Jesus and follow His directions, and in so doing realize His help, may exclaim with the psalmist, "*Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy*

diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies" (Ps. ciii. 1–4).

PRAYER.

Ever merciful and almighty Lord Jesus Christ, we come to Thee as the good Physician from whom proceeds that Divine and healing virtue by which our souls are purified and renewed. We acknowledge that of ourselves we are nothing but evil; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. Were it not for Thee we must die in our sins, and have our part where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. But with Thee there is mercy and plenteous redemption. As Thou didst on earth cast out devils, and heal all manner of sickness and disease among the people, so now, by Thy Divine power, deliver us from our spiritual enemies, and work like miracles of healing in our souls. Help us to repent and to believe in Thee, that our hearts may be open to receive Thy saving health. Purge out all evil affections from our hearts, all evil thoughts from our minds, all evil habits from our lives. Implant in us every holy disposition, and daily increase in us Thy manifold gifts of grace, that we may go from strength to strength until we appear before Thee in glory.

All this we ask, O merciful Saviour, in Thy own name and for Thy loving kindness' sake. *Amen.*

CHRIST THE GIVER OF REST.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."—*Matt.* xi. 28–30.

ALL the blessings promised by the Saviour are exactly suited to our wants. So completely is this the case, that a consideration of these blessings shows to us our spiritual state, our nature and its possibilities, both what we are and what we may become. Thus the gospel is not only a revelation of mercy, but a means of conviction, —a mirror in which we may see ourselves. In its promises of pardon we see our guilt, in its promises of strength we see our weakness, in its promises of salvation we see our lost and ruined state. In this adaptation of the gospel to our nature and its needs, we have convincing proof that the Creator of man and the Author of the gospel is one and the same God.

The invitation in the text is in keeping with all the words of the Saviour. It is addressed to those that "*labour and are heavy laden.*" When we feel that the effort to "*resist the devil*" is weary work,

when we lose courage and are almost inclined to give up the struggle, when we feel that our sins hang like a load upon us and keep us down, and that our trials and afflictions are more than we can bear, then this invitation fits our case. It is then that Jesus speaks to us in these words, and invites us to come unto Him. When most we need pity, Jesus pities us. When we feel the weakest, Jesus comes to our help. This is the sweet way in which He proves how truly He loves us.

It is the Lord Jesus who invites us to come. He is "*Emmanuel, God with us.*" He is "*God manifest in the flesh,*" so that in Jesus the Divine Man we may see God, and know and love Him. The invisible God has made Himself visible in Jesus Christ. Being God, He has the right to *command,* but He prefers to *invite* us to come unto Him. It is as if the infinite mercy of God *entreated* men to accept the blessing He is waiting to bestow.

Being "*the Almighty,*" having "*all power in heaven and in earth,*" Jesus is able to fulfil His promise of giving "*rest*" unto all who come unto Him. He that trusteth in the Lord shall never be put to shame. All our real troubles come from within. If there were no causes of disquietude in ourselves when sickness or misfortune come upon us, then outward trials would cease to be troubles. This is the way in which Jesus gives us rest. He imparts peace to the soul, and fixes it so deeply

there, that outward trials cannot disturb or vex it. He so fills the heart with trust in His love and goodness, that a man is lifted up above the influence of bodily suffering or worldly cares. Even though He sees it best that we should carry the cross a little longer and a little further, He helps to make it as light to us as is for our good. Just so soon as the sorrow or pain has done its work in our souls, He will take it away. "*Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*" (2 Cor. iv. 17). Thus they who trust in Jesus and come unto Him find rest unto their souls.

Jesus not only tells us to come to Him, but He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. It is in imitating His example, in cultivating the mind that was in Him, that we shall find rest. He bids us to be meek in spirit and lowly in heart, because He was "*meek and lowly.*" Think of it! He, the Almighty God, declares Himself to be meek and lowly! He is as infinite in His meekness as He is in His mercy; as infinite in His lowliness, in His humility and condescension to man, as He is infinite in love! How foolish are those who are proud, when God declares Himself to be meek! How pitiful is a man's boast of being great, when the Almighty declares Himself to be lowly! What the Lord thinks of all such boasting He has Himself told us, "*Every one that exalteth himself shall be*

abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xviii. 14). He pronounces blessings on the poor in spirit, on the mourners, and on the meek. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*" (Matt. v. 3–5).

The yoke of the Lord Jesus must be borne by all who would become like Him. The apostle tells us, "*It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings*" (Heb. ii. 10). The Captain of our salvation, the Leader whose steps we are to follow, is Jesus Christ, and His human nature was made perfect through sufferings. "*Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience, by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him*" (Heb. v. 8, 9). He suffered all temptations, all trouble, all trial, for our sakes. He set us a perfect example of patience, of trust in God, of obedience in will and deed. This is His "*yoke*" which we must take upon ourselves.

In thus taking upon us Christ's yoke, and learning of Him, from His example as well as from His words, we find rest unto our souls.

The Lord's yoke is easy, and His burden is light. It is Satan that is a hard master: "*the way of trans-*

gressors is hard." To be in bondage to doubts, fears, worldly cares and troubles, to evil thoughts, feelings, and desires—this is slavery. In this slavery we get no help. God cannot help us so long as we love that which is evil: and none but God can help. But if we take upon us the Lord's yoke, He will so fill us with the love of doing good and of being good, that we shall find it grow delightful to us. If we take up His burden, He will give us needful strength to bear it. God will be our helper, and when we are weary we can lean on Him and renew our strength. We do not soon grow tired in doing what we love to do. This is what St. John felt when he said, "*This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous*" (1 John v. 3). When the love of Jesus is shed abroad in our hearts, then obedience to His words will be a joyous service. We shall joy in the Lord, and His joy will be in us, and our joy will be full.

PRAYER.

Ever merciful and most gracious Lord, who dost invite all to come unto Thee and find rest, we humbly desire to draw nigh unto Thee. Remove from our minds every thought that hinders us from giving up ourselves unto Thee. Cleanse us, good Lord, from all those evils which prevent Thy coming into us, and reigning in our souls. We labour and

are heavy laden: our sins weigh heavily upon us. We confess our sins before Thee, and acknowledge how unworthy we are of the least of Thy tender mercies. We trust only in Thy love. Pardon us, O Lord, and give us Thy help that we may take Thy yoke upon us by following in Thy footsteps; and take Thy burden upon us by keeping Thy word whole and undefiled. Bring us to Thy rest. May Thy grace rule in our hearts, that we may be delivered from our sins. Make us meek and lowly, ever delighting in striving to become more and more like Thee. In all times of trouble be nigh unto us to help us, and teach us to cast all our care upon Thee who carest for us. Thus in obedience and suffering enable us to do Thy will, to the glory of Thy most holy Name. *Amen.*

THE WAY OF SALVATION.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."—*Acts* xvi. 31.

WE are all creatures needing salvation. The distinctions which exist among men, of young and old, of rich and poor, of wise and ignorant, are distinctions which belong only to this life. When we think of men as immortal beings, whose future state will be determined by the real character of their souls as to truth and goodness, as to faith and love, we may properly forget all other differences between them. Such differences are of no moment in view of man's eternal interests. All men are alike in this—they need a Saviour.

When a sinner is first roused to a sense of his soul's danger, his chief anxiety is how to flee from the wrath to come. But the only way of escaping the consequences of sin is by deliverance from sin itself. The salvation offered to us in the gospel is therefore salvation from sin; meaning by sin, not merely outward transgression of the Divine law; but sinful loves, sinful thoughts, sinful deeds—all that make up that state of sinfulness which, if confirmed

in this life, will bear the bitter fruits of misery in the life to come.

The Saviour, who will rescue men from sin here and from misery hereafter is the Lord Jesus Christ, unto whom "*all power is given in heaven and in earth*" (Matt. xxviii. 18). What, then, must we do to be saved? This important question needs to be asked by all. The apostle answers it, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" What are we to understand by this?

To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, as here enjoined by the apostle, means *to trust in Him for salvation.* Not merely to trust in what He did for man more than 1800 years ago, but to trust in Him for what He is willing and able to do for us now and for evermore. "*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life*" (Rom. v. 10). He reconciled us unto God by the cross: He will save us by His present operation in our souls.

Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation implies on our part—

(1) *Conviction of sin and danger;* not merely a general conviction that all men need salvation, but a personal and realising conviction that we ourselves are sinners, and that "*the wages of sin is death.*" The Holy Spirit strives to convince us of sin; not only of sins committed by transgressing the laws of

God, but of that crowning sin of not believing in Jesus, of rejecting Him and His great salvation. "*He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God*" (John iii. 18). How can we trust in Jesus as our Saviour if we do not feel that we are sinners, and that as sinners we need to be saved from sin—from the power of sin, and from the penalty of sin?

(2) *Willingness to part with sin at whatever cost.* The Saviour showed this emphatically when He bade us pluck out a right eye, to cut off a hand or foot, if they make us to offend. This means that when repentance is "*unto salvation*" it will be so thorough and deep that we shall be willing, at any cost of pain or effort, to banish every evil thought, to mortify every evil lust, to cease from every evil deed. Cross-bearing is the condition of discipleship. "*Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*" (Mark viii. 34).

(3) *The desire to walk in newness of life.* It is not enough that sincere repentance leads us to the "*strait gate,*" we must strive to walk in the heavenly road. It is not enough that we "*cease to do evil,*" we must also "*learn to do well.*" Hands were given to us, not only that we should not do "*the works of darkness,*" but that we should work the works of Him that sent us, while it is day. Speech was given to us, not only that we should not lie and

cheat and blaspheme, but that our lips should "*show forth His praise.*" Feet were given to us, not only that we should not stand in "*the way of sinners,*" but that we should walk in "*the paths of righteousness.*"

Trust in Jesus saves men, not because it is all that is needed, but because it opens our souls to receive from the Lord *grace whereby we may be saved.* It is that attitude of the soul towards Christ which brings the convinced and repentant sinner under the influence of His saving power. "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*" (Rev. iii. 20). Trust in Jesus opens the door of the heart for the waiting Saviour to come in. Jesus endues the soul which thus receives Him with His saving strength. Then the man is enabled by the Lord to conquer sin—to overcome, even as the Lord overcame—to press towards the mark of the prize of his high calling, to lay hold on eternal life.

As salvation is a life-long work, it is evident that a saving trust in Jesus is not merely a single act done once for all, but a *habit* of the soul, in the exercise of which salvation is progressively attained. There is indeed a turning-point in a man's spiritual history, when realizing his lost and guilty state he commits himself to the Lord Jesus Christ as his only Saviour from sin and ruin; and resolves, in

dependence on His ever-ready and all-sufficient help no longer to live unto himself but unto Him who died for him and rose again. In this great faith-act, involving in it all interior conditions essential to the inception of the Lord's saving grace, he passes from death unto life (John v. 24); he is delivered from the power of darkness, and is translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. i. 13). This, however, is only *the beginning of salvation.* If, thenceforth, the life he lives in the flesh he lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him—a faith which works by love, overcomes the world, and brings forth the fruits of righteousness—he will at last receive the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul. Hence to all who have entered on the narrow way that leadeth unto life, the Saviour says—"*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*" (Rev. ii. 10). But "*if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them*" (2 Pet. ii. 20, 21).

There are some who say they are waiting the Lord's time. They profess their willingness to be saved, and they hope that, at some time or other,

the Lord will convert their souls. Let them not deceive themselves. *The Lord is ever striving to save every man.* That which is needed is that men should "*strive to enter in at the strait gate.*" The real reason why men do not enter is that, though they wish to escape punishment, they do not wish to part with their sins. Continued delay is continued resistance to the Spirit; continued waiting is continued danger to their souls. Such are the sleepers and dead men to whom the prophet and the apostle speak—"*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*" (Eph. v. 14). Christ waits for us to come unto Him and be saved: our duty is not to wait but to come.

PRAYER.

O most merciful and loving Lord Jesus Christ, who art the Redeemer of all men, and the Saviour of them that believe, we praise Thee for Thy patience and longsuffering in that, notwithstanding our past abuse of Thy mercy, we are still invited to come unto Thee and be saved.

Open Thou our eyes, O Lord, to see how sinful we are; show us the danger of an unrepentant state. Make us willing to part with every known sin, and to take up our cross and follow Thee. Help us to trust in Thee for salvation, and to co-operate with Thy mercy, by resisting evil in all its forms, both inward and outward, as sin against Thee. O Lord,

take possession of our hearts, and draw our affections to Thyself. Give us such a true sense of our necessities as may render Thy salvation precious, and such views of our high calling in Thee as may fill our hearts with joy and our lips with praise, and excite us to love Thee, and to live unto Thee who died for us and rose again.

Purify us by Thy truth from all sordid and base affections, and form us anew according to the order and spirit of heaven. Remove from us every evil influence, and every sphere arising from beneath, of coldness and indifference towards the things of truth and righteousness. And having been led by Thy mercy through the strait gate, help us to walk in the narrow way that leadeth unto life.

Thus prepare us, O Lord, for Thy eternal kingdom of righteousness, purity, and peace; where Thou alone reignest King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Fountain of love, wisdom, and blessedness—God over all, blessed for ever. *Amen.*

JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."—*John* x. 14.

HOW helpless are "*sheep that have no shepherd!*" Even in countries where sheep are exposed to comparatively little harm, they need a shepherd's care. He has to tend them daily, to move them to fresh pastures, to heal those that are diseased, to go after those that are astray. But in eastern lands the care and kindness of shepherds are much more necessary. Pasturage is wider, and the flocks often have to travel a long way to water. The enemies of the sheep are fiercer and more numerous. The shepherd has to be constantly with the flock. He knows the sheep of his flock one from another, and could call each one by its name. The sheep learn to know the shepherd's voice and their own names, and will come to him when called. In journeying from one pasturage to another, or to the place of watering, the shepherd goes before, and the sheep follow him. When the lambs grow weary, a good shepherd will take them in his arms and carry them, and he will "*gently lead those that are with young.*"

It is needful to know these things, that we may

understand the beautiful comparison which the Lord makes between Himself and a good shepherd.

Jesus says, "*I am the good shepherd*" (John x. 11–14). The psalmist says, "*The Lord is my shepherd*" (Ps. xxiii. 1). This shows that Jesus is the Lord, that is Jehovah, the one living and true God who came into the world. It is well to take note of this, for then we can see that when we trust in the love and care of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, we really put our trust in God.

The Lord's true sheep are those who not only believe in Him, but also love and obey the Lord in whom they believe. Of these sheep we read that they know the Shepherd's voice. They know it is the Lord who speaks to them in the Bible, His most holy Word. They know it is the Lord who speaks to them in their consciences—telling them that they ought to shun this or that, because it is a sin against God; or that they ought to do this or that, because it is commanded by God and is pleasing in His sight.

They follow the Lord whithersoever He leads. To follow the Lord, means to obey His voice, to be guided by His word and Spirit, to imitate His example, to walk in His steps. Observe! the Lord Jesus does not compel us to do this, He does not drive us into the right path; that would destroy our freedom in spiritual things, which the Lord is most careful to preserve. He leads, but the sheep may

refuse to follow; they may err and stray from His ways, and become "*lost sheep.*" If the Lord could compel men to follow Him, and thereby save all men, none would be lost. God's love would save all men, for He "*willeth not the death of a sinner, but that all should be converted and live.*" But that would not be salvation which man did not freely accept. Salvation is of the Lord, but the condition of salvation is man's willingness to be saved—willingness, not merely to escape punishment, but to part with his sins. It is to this consent of the will that the Lord refers, when He says: "*The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*" (Rev. xxii. 17). The Spirit of Jesus working in men's souls urges them to come; the Bride, which is the Church, speaking through its ministers and members, invites them to come; it is the duty of all who have heard the gracious offer to repeat it; and whosoever will is free to take the water of life.

It is not enough merely to look to Jesus, we must follow Him. If the sheep are to get to the green pastures and the still waters, they must journey where the shepherd leads. The Lord does not bring the green pastures and the still waters to His sheep while they are lying down in the desert. He leads them to the comfort and spiritual plenty; but they

must follow Him to obtain these blessings. *Too many wait, but do not walk:* none can wonder if these be disappointed of their hope.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus fulfilled a great prophecy. "*The Lord God will come . . . He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young*" (Isa. xl. 10, 11). The Lord, who created man, has given to him the power of receiving from Himself all precious spiritual blessings—such as knowledge, strength, confidence, consolation, peace, and joy. All these blessings are included in the idea of spiritual food. The gift of these is what is meant by the Lord's feeding His flock like a shepherd. They constitute a part of that "*daily bread*" which our souls need, and for which we should daily pray. When we droop and are faint, when the sorrows and troubles of life are too much for us to bear, then He will gather us with His arms, that is, He will give us new strength, new trust, new zeal, new desires for goodness. It is comforting to think that we can approach closer to the Lord in times of trouble than in times of prosperity. Sorrow and penitence soften the heart, so that Jesus may stamp His image on it. They open the heart, so that the love of Jesus may enter more fully into it. When we feel weak, we want to lean: when we feel hungry, we yearn to be fed. "*Those that are with young,*"

mean those who are striving to be wiser and better, in whom new desires after goodness, new perceptions of truth, are beginning to have life. These the Good Shepherd gently and tenderly leads. Just as much as our strength will bear, so much the Lord lays upon us. When more is to be borne, He will give more strength.

The Good Shepherd watches over every one of His sheep, and over all alike. It is not a regard for His flock in a general sort of way, but a regard to the powers and needs of each. His providence is over all, because it is over each. He loves all, because He loves every one. How then are we bound, by every obligation of gratitude and affection, to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, and to follow Him.

PRAYER.

Ever merciful and adorable Lord Jesus, who hast declared Thyself to be the Good Shepherd, who dost love us with a father's tenderness, and dost pity us with a Saviour's compassion; who art ever striving to lead us to green pastures and by still waters; we bless Thine infinite goodness for the sweet teachings of Thy word.

We desire to put ourselves under Thy care. Teach us to know Thy voice and to follow Thee. May we trust in Thee as our guardian and our guide. Protect us from our spiritual enemies, and lead us in

the paths of righteousness, for Thy Name's sake. Incline our hearts that we may keep Thy law, and no more wander from Thy ways. We confess that we have often strayed from Thee and gone after false guides, following the wicked devices and desires of our own hearts. We implore Thy pardon for all our follies and sins, and beseech Thee to help us to become more truly Thy people and the sheep of Thy pasture.

Increase our trust in Thee, O Lord, and, knowing that Thou art ever at hand to succour and to guide, to help and to strengthen us, may we seek Thy counsel and walk thereby, to the profit of our own souls, and to the glory of Thy most holy Name. *Amen.*

THE NEW BIRTH.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—*John* iii. 5.

THE important subject of the nature and necessity of the new birth is presented to us in these solemn words of the Lord. They were spoken to Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews! He came to Jesus by night, as though ashamed to be seen asking instruction from Him whom the rulers and Pharisees despised. He fitly came in the dark, because he was truly in mental darkness as to the nature of salvation and the means by which it was to be secured. His ignorance of these things extorted a rebuke from the Saviour: "*Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?*"

The message, not to Nicodemus only but to all men is, "*Ye must be born again.*" While these words declare a necessity, they also imply a promise; for that which the Lord has declared to be necessary He will enable us to attain. Thus understood, the message is a revelation of God's gracious purpose towards us, an assurance that we *may* be born again and enter into the kingdom of God

Whence arises that necessity for the new birth which, twice, with a double "*verily,*" our Lord so solemnly asserts?

Man, as his Maker designed him, was to be a creature consciously receptive of love and wisdom, of goodness and truth, from God. He was to love the Lord above all things, and his neighbour as himself. He was formed to become an image and a likeness of his Creator, upright and just, wise and good. Sin came into the world, and it has marred this image and likeness, and defeated this purpose. Sin, wilfully indulged, has become a habit, a second nature unto man. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children; not because God imputes the sins of the fathers to the children, but because children inherit the evil dispositions of their parents. Children are born with an innate and hereditary predisposition to sin; the stream of life is polluted in its course from father to son. These hereditary propensities burst out and show themselves even in infants, in the form of selfishness, greediness, passion, vindictiveness, sullenness, obstinacy, and other vices. It is the life-long struggle of every one who seeks to be good, to overcome these enemies within, these "*foes of his own household.*" It is these evil concupiscences and wicked lusts which afford to evil spirits a standing place, as it were, in the souls of men. It is these wicked inclinations which they excite, and which, when excited, lead us to sin. Because our state by

nature is so full of iniquity, it is thus described by the Lord: "*The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores*" (Isa. i. 5, 6).

As this is our state by nature, how needful is it that we should be "*born again.*" We have been "*born of the flesh,*" born into conscious possession of the "*carnal mind, which is death:*" we need to be "*born of the Spirit,*" born into conscious possession of the "*spiritual mind, which is life and peace.*" Only in this way can the naturally unclean become spiritually clean; only in this way can the unholy and impure become pure and holy in the sight of the angels and of God.

To be "*born of water and of the Spirit,*" is to be born of truth and goodness from the Lord; that is, into a life of faith and charity. Hence St. Paul, speaking of the "*new creation*" (Gal. vi. 15), says, "*In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love*" (Gal. v. 6). And St. John says, "*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. And every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God*" (1 John v. 1; iv. 7). For as love and wisdom are one in God, so in all who are "*born of God*" there is a union of goodness and truth, of charity and faith.

Except this great change takes place, "*Except a*

man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." By the kingdom of God is here meant, not only the future kingdom of God in heaven, but the present kingdom of God on earth. It is the reign of heavenly affections in man's heart; the reign of heavenly thoughts in man's mind; the reign of heavenly principles in man's words and works. Hence the Lord has taught us to pray, "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven*" (Matt. vi. 10). The kingdom of God on earth is a state of love, wisdom, and obedience; God's sovereignty in the hearts, minds, and lives of men. The kingdom of God in heaven is of the same kind. Heaven is heaven only because the angels joy in their love of God, delight in the wisdom they receive from God, and are made perfectly happy in their perfected obedience. Hence those who, being "*born again,*" enter into the kingdom of God on earth, will, when their regeneration is complete, enter into the kingdom of God in heaven.

But how is this change to be brought about? How may a man be "*born again*" into a life of faith and charity?

It is a law of Divine order that man is receptive of truth and goodness from the Lord just so far as their opposites are removed. In order therefore to receive these Divine blessings, man's part is *to store his memory with the truths and precepts of the Word, and to resist in himself all that is contrary to these.*

In doing this, not in his own strength but in prayerful dependence on the Lord, he receives a Divine influx which removes from his mind and heart the forms of falsity and evil, and implants the opposite forms of truth and goodness in their stead. It is thus he is "*born of water and of the Spirit,*" born of truth in the mind and of goodness in the heart. It is thus he enters into the kingdom of God here, and is made meet to enter into the kingdom of heaven hereafter.

The death unto sin and the new birth unto righteousness is not completed in a moment. It is a gradual process effected by the Lord during man's co-operation. Every accession of truth and goodness from the Lord is a new birth. As fast as the old man is put off the new man is put on. But the work is incomplete so long as any falsity in the mind or any evil in the heart remains to be resisted and removed.

It has been said that man's part in the work of regeneration is to resist in himself all that is contrary to the Word. This, which at first seems only a negative injunction, does in fact embrace the whole duty of man. For the Word of God forbids all the wickedness we are tempted to do, and enjoins all the duties we are tempted to leave undone. *Inclination to such wickedness, and disinclination to such duties are, therefore, the evils we have to resist in ourselves;* and it is evident that he who

does this is striving to be "*perfect and complete in all the will of God.*" The habit of self-compulsion, whenever we are tempted to omit duty or to commit sin—*from the motive that every surrender to the powers of evil hinders our regeneration and is displeasing to the Lord*—opens the soul to the influx of good affections; sins, once habitual, cease to have dominion over us; and duties, once distasteful, become at length the very joy of our lives.

PRAYER.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, whom without holiness no man can see; we desire to humble ourselves before Thee, conscious of our impurity and of our need of Thy cleansing grace. We confess, O Lord, that of ourselves we are nothing but evil; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. We have delighted in ways that are not good. For whatever good desires we have felt, and for whatever good deeds we have done, we owe Thee gratitude and praise; for from Thee alone all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works proceed. Help us to feel the depth of our iniquities, and to mourn because of the wickedness of our hearts. Awaken us to a sense of our real state, that we may know our soul's wants, and thus realize Thy merciful willingness to give unto us according to our needs.

Thou wilt have mercy on all who seek Thy mercy: Thou wilt restore all those that are penitent. Create

in us, we beseech Thee, new and contrite hearts, that we, lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and deliverance. Teach us what the new birth is, and help us to desire it above all things. Baptize us with Thy truth and righteousness, that we may be indeed Thy people, and Thou mayest be our God. Baptize us with Thy love and with Thy Spirit of power, that we may love Thee above all things and have strength to do Thy will. Free us from the bondage of sin and Satan, that we may rejoice in the liberty wherewith Thou dost make us free. And, being born again of Thee, may we show forth in our lives that Thou art in us and we in Thee, to the honour and glory of Thy Holy Name. *Amen.*

PRESENT SUFFERING AND FUTURE GLORY.

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal: but the things which are not seen are eternal."—*Rom.* viii. 18; 2 *Cor.* iv. 16–18.

IF God had no other and higher purpose in regard to man than belongs to this world, we might well complain of having to suffer. The privations of poverty, the pains of disease, distress of mind, anxiety, and sorrow, would all be inexplicable as to any providential design in them, if this life were the all of existence, or if there were no such thing as the purification of the soul. Take away from men their belief in immortality and in the need of preparation for a future life, and there is no consolation left for "*those who mourn.*" Only so far as we have a lively faith in "the glory which awaits" the people of God, and only so far as we can see how sorrow and sufferings make the

soul tender and prepare it for "the glory which awaits," can we take comfort in the times of our distress.

We are led by these passages to think of the compensations provided by our all-wise and ever merciful Father for those who are called upon to suffer.

Sorrow is a great teacher. How often do we find a serene patience, a firm trust in God, a devoted attachment to the Sacred Word, an earnst looking for the things which are to come hereafter, brought about by suffering. Buoyant with health, immersed in the pleasures or absorbed by the anxieties of this world, our spiritual life languishes, and selfish and worldly loves obtain dominion over us. To deliver us from this bondage, nothing else would often avail except some sore disappointment, some painful cross, the loss of some dear friend, the being brought down to a bed of sickness and to come near to death. We rise from the affliction sadder, perhaps, but wiser men and women.

Sorrow is a softener of the soul. Our natural haughtiness needs to be abased. Many a "*thorn in the flesh*" is given to us lest we should be exalted above measure. Our sympathies are deepened and widened by suffering. We are more ready to help as well as more able to pity after we ourselves have suffered, than before. It is because our Saviour was "*a Man of sorrows and acquainted with*

grief," that He draws grieving and sorrowing souls to Himself. He knoweth our woes. He was "*touched with the feeling of our infirmities.*" Having been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, He is able to succour us when we are tempted.

Sorrow loosens our hold on the world. When a wise man was once shown a beautiful estate and a charming house replete with all the luxuries which wealth could buy, he said—"Having all these things must make the idea of dying and leaving them very terrible!" We need to be weaned from the world. The discipline of suffering is in most cases the only means which Infinite mercy could employ to teach us the shadowy and fleeting nature of all external things. We were created to live for ever, but to remain only a little while below; and it is a merciful Providence which leads us to set our affections on things above.

Sorrow opens the soul to the inflowing of spiritual graces. True peace can only be realized and appreciated by the heart that has known the struggle of spiritual warfare. Joy will be deep or shallow in us according as the inmost recesses of the soul have been explored by the probe of suffering. Thus, in the hour of trial we gain strength; coming out of tribulation we value our deliverance. The grace of God is thus revealed in us while we are here; and our souls are thus prepared for "*the glory which shall*

be revealed in us" hereafter. The course of affliction is a *purifying* process. It is the furnace which refines the silver and the gold of our souls, and burns away the dross. Our sufferings are ordered by the Lord, and regulated by Him, and all for our present and everlasting good. The spiritual benefits which sufferings bring are so great that the sufferings which bring them are not to be compared with them. "*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*"

Discerning these things "*we faint not,*" for "*though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*" As our day is, so our strength shall be. The cross shall be made light, because of the strength which shall be given. The affliction will not seem heavy, because Jesus will help us to bear the load.

The recompense is an abiding, an eternal one. Death, which delivers from the bondage of the flesh, will also deliver the good man from all pain. Sorrow will cease when the purpose for which it is permitted is accomplished. God will wipe away all tears from the eyes of His children, and all grief from their hearts. The state of trial and preparation is in this world; the next life will reveal what the trials and processes of this life have done for us. Well then may we have patience and hope to the end, "*while we look not*

at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Observe that affliction does not work out "*a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*" for all. The apostle limits this blessed result to those who, while suffering, look beyond their suffering and above it; to those who, while bearing affliction, "*look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.*" That is, suffering is salutary only to those who see the purpose of their affliction, and strive in faith and patience to have this purpose accomplished in themselves. It may easily be that sorrow may harden the heart, fret the spirit, and sour the temper of those who think only of the "*temporal*" and look not at the "*eternal.*" In order to profit from sorrow, we need to have a lively faith in immortality and eternal life. Those who have not yet attained this faith, may indeed, in times of trouble and affliction, sorrow as those who have no hope. So that the gospel of our blessed Saviour, by which He "*hath brought life and immortality to light,*" is thus seen to be God's provision of comfort for those who mourn.

PRAYER.

All-wise and ever-merciful Lord Jesus Christ, Thou wilt not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, Thou wilt give unto us strength according to our day. Having Thyself suffered, being tempted, Thou art able to succour them that are tempted. Having borne our woes and carried our sorrows, Thou art able to help those who come to Thee, trusting in Thy sympathy and aid.

In our deepest states of trial, O Lord, enable us to see Thy guiding hand, to feel Thy presence, and to receive Thy help. We ask not to be saved from needful suffering; we do ask to be saved from sin. Help us to set our affections on things above, to bear all things needful to be borne, and in our weakest and most bitter hour to cry, "Not my will, O Lord, but Thine be done!" Make us wise indeed unto salvation. Shine upon the darkness of our minds, O Thou heavenly Light, that in Thy light we may see the truth, and know that Thou art not far off, but ever ready to help and bless. Soften our hearts; take away the heart of stone, and give us a heart of flesh. Wean us from the world and the love thereof. Remove from us all pride and haughtiness of soul. Open Thou our hearts that Thou mayest come in and dwell there for ever. Purge out of us the dross and corruption of our nature, that we may be in Thy sight as silver refined in the

furnace, as gold that is seven times purified. We would walk in Thy steps, O Lord; and as Thou wast made perfect through suffering, oh help us to take up our cross and follow Thee, until we come to that blessed world where those who have known the fellowship of Thy sufferings are made partakers of Thy glory. And all praise be given to Thine adorable name, our Saviour and our God. *Amen.*

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."— *Ps.* xxiii. 4.

THE contemplation of death forces even the thoughtless to be serious. Man is the only being who can hope for immortality, and the only being who is aware that he must die. Half of those who are born into the world die before they are fifteen years of age, and the largest portion of these die before they are seven years old. They are few in number who live to be "*threescore years and ten.*" Whether our years be a few more or a few less, we shall all have to pass through "*the valley of the shadow of death.*"

The idea of dying is a solemn one, and to most persons very painful. It makes us sad to think of parting with all who are dear to us on earth. It makes us feel sadder to think of the sorrow they will feel, or of the new anxieties our removal will bring upon them. Even though our life in the world has been a scene of troubles, we have more often smiled than wept, we have felt more happiness than misery. God has been good to us. The way

in which we cling to life shows that life, on the whole, has been more a time of gladness than a time of woe.

The idea of what comes after death makes the thought of death very awful. Death is called "dark," chiefly because of our ignorance concerning the future life. If we truly believed that death would introduce us into a state of life far more blessed than we can enjoy here, we should almost desire to die. The terrors of death would be taken away, if we could only see that dying was the way of entering into a state of eternal joy and peace, where God Himself would wipe away all tears from our eyes, and would take away all sorrow from our hearts. "*The valley of the shadow of death*" is gloomy because of the darkness that hangs over it: if the darkness were dispersed, the valley would cease to be terrible.

Two things are needed to relieve us from the fear of death. We want light to shine in the valley so as to banish the darkness about ourselves. We need trust in God for others, so as to feel secure in leaving our dear ones to His tender mercy. Both these precious blessings are offered in the gospel.

"*Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel.*" The believer in Jesus Christ is delivered from the fear of death. He may know that in the Lord's house are many mansions, and that Jesus has

gone to prepare a place for him; that where Christ is, he may be also. He may know that, while to live is Christ, to die is gain. He may feel, with St. Paul, that he would rather be absent from the body and be present with the Lord. He may know that his treasure is laid up in heaven, and that when he dies the Lord will receive him unto Himself. He may remember that Lazarus was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. He may remember that St. John saw in heaven thousands of the spirits of those who once dwelt on earth, and who had been redeemed by the Lord Jesus out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. He may know that those who die in the Lord are blessed, for they cease from their labours and their works do follow them. He may remember that there is a rest which remaineth for the people of God. He may feel that the Lord loves him, and that he loves the Lord, and that in the other life he will be with those whom he truly loves.

These precious thoughts shine like stars upon the valley of the shadow of death, and, instead of fearing evil, the Christian may rejoice in hope of the immortality which Jesus has revealed. Through the dark cloud which hangs over the river of death come to the believer gleams of the glorious gates of the heavenly kingdom, and the radiant angels who wait to conduct him across the stream. We might almost long to depart, did not the Saviour

teach us to say—"Not my will, O Lord, but Thine be done."

For those who remain, Jesus, in the gospel, teaches us to trust. If God's loving care is over the lilies of the field and the fowls of the air, how much more will it be over the children of men! He who numbers the hairs of our heads, and who knows all our wants, will withhold no good thing from them that love Him. If we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all other needful things will be added unto us. Perhaps our removal from the world will be the very means of causing the hearts of those whom we love to turn to God for comfort, to love Him, and to receive from Him all needful things. Love of God brings trust in God.

These two precious means of comfort and strength the gospel gives to us when we are in the valley of the shadow of death. For ourselves who are about to depart—"*to die is gain.*" For our dear ones whom we are about to leave—if God clothes the lilies and feeds the sparrows, will He not also take care of them? He will comfort and bless all who put their trust in Him.

Leaning thus upon the staff of God's promises, holding the rod of God's power, and trusting in the Saviour's love and mercy, the dark valley ceases to be terrible; we are comforted, and find strength to help us in our time ot need.

PRAYER.

O Lord, our merciful Redeemer and Saviour, the strength of all who put their trust in Thee; we adore Thee as the God of our life and the refuge of our souls. Thou knowest what is best for us, for Thou art all-wise: Thou wilt do what is best for us, for Thou art all-loving. Thou didst give unto us life, and hast placed us here for a little while to prepare us for an eternal habitation in Thy heavenly kingdom. Glory be to Thee, O Lord, who by Thy holy gospel hast brought life and immortality to light.

Whenever in Thy wisdom Thou shalt see fit to call us hence, oh comfort our hearts with the sweet promises of Thy word. Help us to see that death is the gate of life. Guide us through the dark valley. Give us patience to bear pain. Make us resigned to Thy wise and loving will. Lift all fear from our souls. May we by faith see Thee beckoning us with Thy hand, and hear Thee calling to us, "Friend, come up higher!"

Fill our hearts with peace and trust. Thou hast led us and helped us hitherto, and wilt lead us and help us unto the end. May we cast all our care upon Thee who carest for us; and when our work on earth is done, do Thou, O blessed Lord, receive us into Thy heavenly kingdom, where shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall be any more pain. *Amen.*

THE MORTAL BODY AND THE IMMORTAL SOUL.

"We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—2 *Cor.* v. 1.

FOR wise and necessary purposes God has implanted in His rational creatures the love of life. The most dreadful idea that a human mind can conceive is that of annihilation, of ceasing to exist. Life is in itself a blessing. The fear of death might well become a horror of death, if we could believe that the death of the body puts an end to the existence of the soul. From this horror the Lord Jesus altogether delivers us. He "*hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel*" (2 Tim. i. 10). The consolations of the gospel on this subject are very precious indeed.

Man in this world is a dual being: consisting of a spiritual and immortal part, his soul, and of a natural and mortal part, his body. The soul is the real man, which for a while is tabernacled in the flesh. It is the soul which hears, sees, feels, thinks, desires, speaks, and acts. The body is no more than a marvellous material organism which lives

from the soul, in which the soul dwells, and by which the soul remains in the natural world and takes part in its concerns.

When man is said to die, it is only the body which really dies. The reason is because the body is no longer suited to be a dwelling place for the soul. The marvellous and mysterious links which previously united the soul to the body are broken. The soul takes its flight from the body; and as its life is departing the body dies. The body being dead truly means that the soul has left it. Now that its life is gone, the body, subject to the wonderful processes of natural chemistry, will waste away, decompose, and mingle with the dust. "Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," is therefore properly said when the body is placed in the grave.

But the real man, the soul, is not destroyed by quitting the body. It remains a living, thinking, loving, conscious being, and dwells in the spiritual world. If the man has been good, pious, and holy, if he has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and has striven to keep His holy commandments, he will, like Lazarus, be "*carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom*"—that is, he will go to heaven. He will enter into and dwell in the heavenly mansions about which Jesus spake when He said—"*In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you*" (John xiv. 2). He will join the Church

triumphant, the "*innumerable company of angels,*" "*the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven,*" "*the spirits of just men made perfect*" (Heb. xii. 22, 23). He will hear the blessed welcome of the Saviour, and realize the statement of the psalmist: "*In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore*" (Ps. xvi. 11).

In that state of happiness the man is as truly a man as when he dwelt on earth. He is now a spiritual man, possessing a spiritual body, dwelling in the spiritual world. The soul of man, when separated from the material body, is in the human form. Hence when Moses appeared to Peter, James, and John, ministering to the Lord in the mount of transfiguration, although his material body, "*the earthly house of this tabernacle,*" was dissolved, having been buried "*in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor*" (Deut. xxxiv. 6), more than 1400 years before, yet Moses was still in the human form. By death man ceases not to be a man. We may be sure that he possesses in the other life all that is essential to his existence as a man—memory, consciousness, intelligence, and affections, in a spiritual body adapted to the spiritual world. In the case of those who have been truly members of the Lord's Church, servants and disciples of the Saviour, there can be no question that their faculties are purified and exalted far

beyond any perfection attainable on earth. Their capacity for joy is enlarged; the joys they experience are beyond all comparison higher and holier; and of the increase of their blessedness there shall be no end.

The joys of the redeemed in heaven do not consist merely in vocal praises of the Most High. Every act they perform is indeed an act of worship and adoration; because everything they do is prompted by love to God, is directed by wisdom from God, and is done for the honour and glory of the Lord. Worship, either in heaven or on earth, does not consist of vocal prayer and praise alone. We worship the Lord most worthily when we delight in doing His will. Our life is a life of praise when we live to the honour and glory of the Giver of all good gifts, who operates within us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Whatever may be the nature of the service we may there have to perform, there can be no question that every use and function will enhance our happiness, and deepen our gratitude and love to the Lord. Heavenly light will enable us the better to understand the ways of our Creator and Saviour; heavenly love will fill our ever enlarging affections; heavenly uses will employ our ever increasing powers. The Lord's joy will then be in us, and our joy will be full. However actively engaged in the heavenly ministrations, the service of the Lord will be perfect

freedom, our work will be truly rest, because truly delightful to our souls.

Contemplating such happiness, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest, where those who die in the Lord are blessed, for they cease from their labours and their works do follow them—we cannot wonder at the apostle wishing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. v. 8). Seeing so clearly that when the "*earthly house of this tabernacle*"—this mortal body—should be "*dissolved,*" he would have "*a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,*" we need not wonder that he should say in another place, "*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,*" or that he should have "*a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better*" than to live in the flesh (Phil. i. 21, 23). Death for him had no terrors. God had been building up within his fleshly tabernacle a spiritual body, a house not made with hands, which should be eternal in the heavens. He knew that when his body died he should inhabit this beautiful house, and that mortality should be "*swallowed up of life.*"

PRAYER.

Ever blessed Lord Jesus, Thou that livest and wast dead, and who art alive for evermore; Thou

who didst abolish death, and didst bring life and immortality to light by Thy gospel; Thou that hast the keys of hell and of death; Thou who didst go from the world in order to prepare a place for us on high among the heavenly mansions—we desire to bless and praise Thee for the word of life, and for the hope of glory which Thou hast given us.

We thank Thee that Thou dost lift up our hearts above the fear of death. We bless Thee for the assurance that we are heirs and joint-heirs with Thyself of that kingdom which doth not fade away. We would be with Thee and see Thee as Thou art. Having this hope within us, we would strive to become pure as Thou art pure, holy even as Thou art holy.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, to help us to trust Thee more fully, to love Thee more deeply, to serve Thee more faithfully, while Thy providence permits us to remain. Give us a full resignation to Thy will. Make us feel that whether we live we live unto Thee, and whether we die we die unto Thee, so that living or dying we are Thine. Keep us from being over-anxious to remain, and also from impatience to depart. Teach us in all things to submit our wills to Thy will, feeling that Thou art all-loving and all-wise, and knowest best when to call us home to Thyself. Help us while we stay, to do Thy work in the world. Fill us with Thy peace, O Lord; glorify us with Thine own self; and when our work

on earth is done, receive us into those habitations of joy, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest, where Thou wilt wipe away all tears from our eyes, and reign in our hearts the King and Lord of all. *Amen.*

FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

"If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared."—*Psalm* cxxx. 3, 4.

AS soon as any one is convinced that he is indeed a sinner, as soon as the knowledge of his sinfulness troubles him, he desires above all things to obtain the sense of forgiveness. If he has offended his fellow, he knows that sincere contrition, humble confession, and a promise not to offend again, will obtain forgiveness. Indeed he estimates the goodness of the person whom he has offended according to his willingness to forgive. He tests his own growth in goodness by his own readiness to forgive those who have offended him. The notion of an unforgiving, relentless father, or of an unpitying inexorable king, agrees with his idea of a stern tyrant. He cannot conceive of a love which is not eager to pardon the transgressor just as soon as he is truly penitent. Hence, such a mind discerns the tender beauty of the parable of the prodigal son: the father of the prodigal is so truly a father; while the prodigal himself is so faithful a picture of what all men have been or are!

Such a one in such a state of contrition *feels* rather than reasons out the thought—that if a good man is ever ready to forgive the offences of those who truly repent; if a loving father is so eager to find penitence in his erring children, in order that he may show mercy unto them; if the Saviour has used this fact as the basis of His touching parable so as thereby to picture forth the loving-kindness of the heavenly Father,—then God must be ready, nay even most eager, to find genuine penitence in His erring children, so that He may be merciful unto them! Finite love in human fathers is thus eager to satisfy itself in pardoning the penitent. Infinite love in the Father of us all must be infinitely eager to satisfy itself in the pardon of the contrite! We trust in the tenderness of the fathers of our flesh; then may we not trust in the infinite love of God?

When we have thus attained to a just conception of the Divine tenderness, how sweet it is to find in the word of God such a passage as this:—"*If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.*"

This does not mean that God does not observe and know our evil states and our wicked deeds. Who can hope to hide his ways from the Lord, or to conceal his thoughts from Him who seeth all things?—from Him unto whom all hearts are open,

all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid. The meaning is that God will not mark with their appropriate punishment those sins of which we sincerely repent, and which we resolutely abandon. Penitence—which means the real forsaking of our sins, because they are sins against the Lord—is the great condition of forgiveness. "*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon*" (Isa. lv. 7). We must not suppose that man's penitence makes the Lord merciful. The Lord is ever merciful and forgiving; but man, while impenitent, cannot receive the Divine mercy, and therefore cannot enjoy the comfort of a realized forgiveness. The sense of pardon is in fact the comforting sense of the Divine presence, felt in the soul which by penitence has become receptive of it. God cannot dwell with evil, He cannot impart the comfort of His presence to the soul in which Satan reigns.

The text asserts more than that the merciful Lord will have mercy on the penitent. It implies that all need to repent, and therefore that all have gone astray; for it asks, Who should be able to stand if it were not for the pardoning mercy of God? "*If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*" The need to be forgiven is universal, for all men are sinners. The conscience of every

every one to his own way. If Thou, Lord, shouldest be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who shall stand! But we bless Thy Holy Name that Thou hast revealed Thyself as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

But while we trust in Thy mercy, O Lord, keep us ever mindful that sin separates between us and Thee, hinders the reception of Thy mercy, and robs us of the sense of reconciliation with Thee. Grant to us, we beseech Thee, true repentance and Thy Holy Spirit, that we may shun all evil as sin against Thee, and amend our lives according to Thy Holy Word. Show us Thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us Thy salvation. Purge our conscience from dead works to serve Thee the living God. Let Thy Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are Thy children. Enable us to put our whole trust in Thee; to love Thee with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength; and to serve Thee truly all the days of our life. Thus while we live be Thou, O Lord, our life; that when we die, death may be our gain.

And to Thee, O blessed Lord and Saviour, be praise and glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

PERFECT PEACE.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."—*Isaiah* xxvi. 3, 4.

THERE is no blessing to be compared with the blessing of *peace;* for the reason that it implies and includes so many other blessings. A nation which enjoys peace, which neither fears war, nor has to make continual preparations for war, can experience all kinds of prosperity. Trade increases, manufactures are extended, more persons marry, a greater number are born, and art and literature flourish. As war is a most dreadful calamity, bringing with it a vast train of evils, so peace is the greatest of national mercies, including a wide circle of blessings. Peace in the household and peace in our own hearts are, in like manner, precious mercies given by the Lord.

It is more especially to peace in our own souls that the text refers. This peace proceeds from peace with God—when we feel conscious that God loves us, cares for us, watches over us for our good, and will withhold from us no real blessing which we actually need. The man in whom dwells this sub-

lime confidence is also conscious of another set of facts relating to himself—that he desires to shun every evil way, that he delights in every good word and work, that he seeks to know, to do, and to suffer the will of God.

Peace is the blessing that follows pardon. While we are conscious of loving evil and of delighting therein, there can be no peace within us. The knowledge we have of what we ought to be and to do must trouble us so long as we do not what we ought, and are not what God would have us to be. There must be a continual conflict between the truth we know and do not, and the sins we know to be evil and yet do. It is merciful when the Spirit of the Lord will not let us alone in such a state of evil, but continually troubles us until we repent and forsake our sins. There is not, and there cannot be any true peace for the wicked man. His soul is the battle-field on which truth and evil wage a terrible warfare. If he altogether sides with evil, he may succeed in grieving the Holy Spirit and in quenching it, and his conscience may become seared as with a hot iron. Only by altogether siding with the Holy Spirit, going over to the Lord's side, can we find true peace, and with it real joy.

To be in peace is to be in the true order in which our loving Creator designed us to be. It is to be in full harmony with the purposes of God. It is to have our hearts open to the inflowing of Divine

love; our minds open to the inflowing of Divine light; all our various powers and faculties open to the inflowing of life from the Lord. When we are thus receptive of every Divine gift and virtue and grace, there is nothing to hurt nor to destroy in all God's holy mountain. All is at rest because the Lord rules and reigns within us. We have peace, because the peace of God which passeth all understanding is within us; because we have begun to realize the blessing of the adorable Saviour—"*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you*" (John xiv. 27).

Those shall be kept in this perfect peace whose minds are stayed on the Lord. Not only shall they enter into this peace, but the Lord will "*keep*" them in it. That which at first was only a transient feeling, shall become their abiding consciousness. They shall enjoy a continual lifting up of their souls above the cares, anxieties, sorrows, and troubles of life. In every spiritual conflict they shall obtain victory, and the reward of every triumph shall be *peace!* To have our minds "*stayed*" on the Lord, is to make Him our sole dependence—altogether to rely on His mercy and grace.

The reason is given—"*because he trusteth in Thee.*" If we could but obtain this perfect trust in the Lord, peace would follow as its inevitable conse-

in the things of this world, help us to repent of our sinful folly and to trust wholly in Thee.

Give us of Thy peace, O Lord, and preserve us therein all the days of our lives. Assure us of Thy pardon of all our transgressions. Console us with confidence in Thy goodness towards us. Give us a well grounded sense of reconciliation with Thee. Enable us to surrender ourselves with all we have and are to Thee. Take us to Thy care, and enable us to discern Thy hand over us in all things for our good. Reign Thou in our hearts. Fill us with love for Thee, that we may trust and not be afraid. Enable us in all we say and do to seek peace and to pursue it. Being justified, accepted, and sanctified through Thy grace, help us to walk in the ways of peace, to enjoy the delights of peace, to receive a foretaste of that peace which is to be found in all its blissful fulness in Thy presence and at Thy right hand; and thus prepare us for Thy heavenly kingdom, for Thy name and mercy's sake. *Amen.*

GOD ALONE THE SOUL'S SATISFYING PORTION.

"Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."—*Psalm* lxxiii. 25, 26.

THIS psalm pictures to us a very common experience. The psalmist had seen the wicked prosper in worldly matters, knowing but little trouble, and increasing in riches, firm in strength, proud in heart, and setting their mouth against the heavens, and he wondered at their prosperity. So he is led to examine whether mere worldly prosperity can ever satisfy the soul. He reflects on the dangers which attend the possession of great wealth. He describes the sad state and miserable end of those to whom riches are a snare. He seeks to point out what alone is the soul's satisfying portion, and leads us to see the great truth—that the soul can find perfect peace, perfect joy, and abiding rest in the love of God alone. This psalm must have helped many a mind, when wondering at the worldly prosperity of the wicked, and marvelling that those who strive to do and to be good are often tried most grievously.

It is a temptation to which all are more or less subject—to seek in worldly pursuits their full happiness; to measure God's kindness by external success; to regard prosperity as the chief of blessings. It is very difficult, even for good men, not to repine at their own lot, and not to feel envious when they see the wicked flourish and grow strong. Under this trial many can say, "*My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*"

The great question which this psalm presents is —What can fully satisfy the soul?

If man were only as the beasts which perish, if he had no higher aspirations and could feel no nobler wants than they, the world and its pleasures might well satisfy him. To eat, drink, and be merry, might well content a being whose destiny is to die on the morrow and then cease to be. But the merciful Lord has implanted within us deeper wants, because He has designed for us a higher destiny. He has so constituted us that the highest conception of our minds is God, because nothing less than the love of God can supply to us our highest happiness. He has made it possible for us to think of truth, justice, self-sacrifice, and goodness; because only to the extent that we realize the possession of these things can we find perfect peace. Falling short of our highest conceptions of what

man may be and should be, we must come short of the highest joy of which we are capable. To shrink and dwarf our nature down to the low level of mere external things and the delight which they can afford, is to defraud ourselves. It is to give up for time what was meant for eternity; it is to narrow down to the earthly what was intended for heaven. A king's son, an heir to a throne, might choose the squalor, privations, and riotous debauchery of a vagabond's life; but how lamentable that choice! Even more terribly sad is it for a son of God, the heir to a kingdom which shall never fade away, to abandon his birth-right, and to shrivel down his soul into being "*earthly and sensual and devilish.*"

Nothing but the love of God shed abroad in our hearts can fully satisfy the wants which the Creator has implanted within us. In sharp distress, in aching disappointments, in temporal adversity, in seasons of sickness, in frustrated plans, in broken promises, in ruined hopes, and in the hour of death, what can calm the troubled spirit, or assuage the anguish of our minds? These are states which come to all, when the soul asserts its true nobility, and the man looks down on worldly honours, gain, and power, as on inferior things. It sees the hollowness of popular praise; it discerns the deceitfulness of riches; it feels conscious of having been created for better things; it yearns for a peace that these cannot give, for a rest which the loss of these

things cannot take away. It realizes that all external things are of the earth, earthly, while it was made for something more than earth; while it must shortly depart from the earth and leave all these things behind it. Even though the possession of these things could satisfy the soul for a little while, it can only possess them for a little while; and when they are lost, what shall the soul do then?

"*Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.*" In one object alone can true and enduring happiness be found, and that object is God. When God created man He expressly designed that the creature He made should not find satisfying bliss in anything short of Himself. God, therefore, has implanted in us faculties and powers which render us restless and wretched until we find rest in Him. To receive just what He gives; to use what He lends; to submit to His will in all things; to delight in realizing His purpose concerning us,—this it is which can alone lead us into peace, and keep us in it.

Sooner or later the process of loosening our hold of earthly things will commence. Health will break down, the flesh will fail, the power to enjoy earthly things will depart, palsy will come upon our worldly hopes, even the power to use our earthly possessions will waste away. By these means the providence of our all-loving Lord will endeavour to wean us from our earthly-mindedness, and to make us hun-

ger and thirst for higher things. Wretched is the man who feels, in these seasons, that all he loves and cares for is departing; happy is the man who can then say with the psalmist—"*My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*"

There is only one universal purpose concerning man which we can see to be at once worthy of God, and explanatory of all the various vicissitudes of mortal existence,—the purpose of preserving the fullest liberty of thought and will to man, and at the same time to lead man by the exercise of his freedom to eternal life. This purpose, briefly stated, is—to fit man to become an angel in heaven. This Divine purpose rules in all things which concern man. Only by entering into the line of this grand purpose can man find true joy and real blessedness. The Eternal Love craves to conjoin us with Himself, by filling our hearts with love. The Infinite Wisdom seeks to conjoin us with Himself, by filling our minds with truth. The Divine Goodness strives to conjoin us with Himself, by reigning in our lives and ruling in all our deeds. When the Lord dwells in us as in His temple, reigns in us as in His kingdom, works through us as by instruments, then His joy is in us and our joy becomes full. For this we were made; for this should we toil; and it is the expression of the desire of this that we find in the text—"*Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none*

upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

PRAYER.

Ever merciful and most gracious Lord, Thy loving Providence is over all men. Thou art life itself, and only so far as we receive Thee can we truly live. Give us more abundantly of Thy life that we may fix all our love and trust in Thee, and find in Thee the hope and joy of our souls. Thou art indeed as the Vine, and we are as the branches—we are wholly dependent upon Thee. Without Thee we can do nothing;—nothing for our salvation from sin,—nothing for our advancement in holiness. Thou only, O Lord Jesus Christ, canst save us from our sins, and sanctify us by Thy truth, for Thou only hast the words of eternal life, and Thou, by Thy mighty working, art able to subdue all things to Thyself.

Give to us that wise and understanding heart that we may desire the true riches of Thy kingdom. Help us to lay up treasures where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. Keep our hearts in Thy love that we may serve Thee with a single eye to Thy glory. Guard us from all turning aside to mammon and covetousness. Preserve us from the sin of envy and the wickedness of pride.

May we set Thee continually before our face,

walking in Thy way, submitting to Thy will, and finding our delight in being what Thou wouldst have us to be, and in doing and suffering all that Thy loving mercy deems best for us. Be Thou our desire on earth, even as Thou wilt be our one source of blessedness in heaven. Lift us up to the perception of our true interests. Fill our souls with that peace which the world cannot give. Thus help us to live here as those who are in the world but who are not of the world; and when it shall please Thee to call us hence, receiveus unto Thyself, that where Thou art there we may be also. And ever will we ascribe all praise and glory to Thy holy name. *Amen.*

SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."—*Psalm* lxxxiv. 7.

UNLESS we partake of food we must die; unless we partake of food regularly we cannot be strong. The purposes for which we eat are, therefore—firstly, that we may support life; secondly, that we may keep up our bodily strength. The necessity of eating and drinking at regular intervals, and in sufficient quantities, is even greater during youth than it is in adult life; for this important reason—the youth has not only to support life, but he has also to grow in strength. The food which he takes has to supply the loss of substance by the wear and tear of daily life, and to supply new substance to enable him to grow. It is a proof of the Divine goodness that there is such an abundant provision of so many kinds of food for our bodily wants. The Lord takes care of our bodies with the same gracious Providence that watches over all things, feeding the young ravens which cry, furnishing food for all the creatures of His hand.

There is a remarkable analogy between the soul

and the body in regard to the need to partake of food, the uses which food subserves, and the results of not having a proper supply of food. The soul needs spiritual food. It needs to "*hunger and thirst after righteousness*" before it can "*be filled.*" The food proper to the soul consists of sacred truths from the word of God, and holy dispositions and affections, which the Lord gives to those who seek them. The soul must, as it were, feed on and digest these things, in order that it may live a true spiritual life. It must learn these truths, meditate upon them, and fix them in itself as principles of life by acting in accordance with them. It must seek these holy dispositions and affections, cherish them when given, and incorporate them into its very life by acting them out in its daily walk and conversation. Only by so doing can the soul grow in grace and in the knowledge of God.

The soul of every one needs not merely to retain its spiritual life, but to increase in spiritual strength —not merely to live, but to grow. The faculty to discern truth can be strengthened; the capacity to receive the love of God and of the neighbour can be enlarged; the ability to be good and to do good can be continually increased by the good gift of God. The possibility of spiritual growth is unlimited, and in heaven it goes on for ever. The angels for ever continue to grow wiser, more loving, and more mighty for the doing of good. It sets

before us a blessed hope, and supplies us with a blessed encouragement to believe this. The way in which this growth is effected in all heavenly intelligence, grace, and virtue, is this—the souls of the angels continually hunger and thirst after righteousness, and they are continually filled by the Lord.

In like manner, if we are to retain our spiritual life and to increase in spiritual strength, we must feed on the rich bounties which the Lord supplies. If we eat not we shall spiritually die. If we do not hunger we shall never eat. Just as the loss of bodily appetite shows that there is disease lurking in our system, so the loss of spiritual hunger after goodness and spiritual thirst for truth shows that there is disease at work in our souls.

The Lord has appointed various means of grace, in the use of which the soul's wants may be satisfied. These are—public and private worship, the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper, pious meditation, reading and studying the sacred scriptures; *conjoined with the effort at all times to shun what is evil because it is a sin against the Lord, and to do what He has commanded, because it is pleasing in His sight.* The soul that uses these means of grace continually grows wiser, more loving, and more mighty for the treading down of Satan and sin. Its desire thus to grow will become more earnest and more active, and it will be more and more fully satisfied.

It is to this state that the psalmist refers in the text. The whole psalm treats of the benefits and the delights which attend the public worship of God, one of the means of grace which the Lord blesses to the souls of those who sincerely use it. "*How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be still praising Thee.*"

It may be, however, that attendance at public worship is not possible to us. In this case we may still rejoice that the Lord is to be found wherever He is sought; that He is not confined to temples made with hands; that neither at Jerusalem alone nor on Mount Gerizim alone may men worship the Lord, but that He may everywhere be worshipped in spirit and in truth. It is this sincere spiritual worship that brings the soul into communion with the Lord. This worship springs from the soul's hungering for goodness and thirsting for truth. Wherever such souls are, there the Lord will fulfil His promise and they shall be filled. Public worship is a sacred duty and a precious privilege; but when sickness or infirmity prevents it, private worship is equally blessed. Of all who truly and devoutly worship it may be said—"*They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*"

This increase in strength is the blessed consequence of our being "*filled*" by the Lord; and our being thus "*filled*" is dependent on our having "*hungered and thirsted after righteousness.*" We may become stronger in faith—able to know more fully and to see more clearly the truth as it is in Jesus; to know of His doctrine whether it be of God; to find more fully that the truth is in us and that it makes us free. We may become stronger in love—having our hearts more and more purified from selfish and worldly lusts, and more and more filled with love to God and man. We may grow stronger in trusting in the Lord's mercy and grace; stronger in resisting the devil, the world, and the flesh; stronger in ceasing to do evil and in learning to do well; stronger in peace and joy and hope. We shall appear before God, and the Lord will be more plainly revealed to us; for "*they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint*" (Isa. xl. 31).

PRAYER.

O Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every blessing and the spring of all human and angelic joy, we praise Thee for all Thy mercies, but especially for the redemption of our souls, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. Thou hast provided all things abundantly for our growth in heavenly affec-

tions and for our final attainment of life and blessedness everlasting. Thou prolongest our days on earth that we may grow in grace and goodness and in meetness for Thy presence in heaven. O may we diligently use the means placed within our reach for securing the beatitudes of Thy kingdom. May we fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold of that eternal life whereunto we are called. Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those which are before, may we press toward the mark of the prize of our high calling.

Sanctify us wholly to Thy service. May Thy truth be in us and make us free—free from all errors of unbelief, free from all darkness of mind, free from all impurity and uncleanness of heart, free from all evils of life. Give us to hunger and thirst after righteousness that we may be filled. Loosen our affections from the things of this world and fix them upon things eternal, and so order our conduct and conversation in the exercise of every Christian grace and living virtue, that we may go from strength to strength, and at length appear before Thee in Thy heavenly and eternal kingdom.

Grant our prayer, O blessed Lord Jesus, for Thine own name and tender mercy's sake. *Amen.*

SIN BLOTTED OUT.

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."—*Isaiah* xliv. 22.

THIS passage throws great light on a subject very needful to be understood—*the forgiveness of sins.*

Sin does not extinguish God's mercy, but hides it from us, just as clouds may conceal the sun. Yet no clouds can quite obscure all the light which the sun is continually shedding forth. The very light by which we are enabled to see the clouds is from the sun, and is a proof that it still shines. So also, as long as men live in this world, even sin cannot altogether shut out the light of Divine truth, shining into their consciences and enabling them to see both that they are sinners and that their sins separate between them and God. The Lord is ever merciful, and ever seeking to pour His blessing upon us; but sin obscures our perception of His mercy, and intercepts the communication of His grace. Just as the air becomes dark and chill when clouds intervene between the earth and the sun, so the clouds of falsity and evil prevent the

light of Divine truth from illuminating our minds, and the heat of Divine love from warming and vivifying our hearts.

Forgiveness is the removal of these clouds between the soul and God. If the light of the natural sun were continually obscured, and its heat continually intercepted, all things living on the earth would languish and pine. Flowers would lose their tints; fruits would not ripen; harvests would be ruined; there would be desolation and misery in the lands. Precisely similar, as to spiritual things, is the state of the soul which is continually obscured by the thick cloud of transgressions and by the cloud of sins. Few and dull are its thoughts concerning God, holiness, and eternal life; in it "*the peaceable fruits of righteousness*" never come to perfection; it never knows the joy and blessedness of "*first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear*" (Mark iv. 28); it is a scene of spiritual barrenness and desolation. Its state is described in the word as a wilderness and a desert, a sterile waste. Forgiveness removes the clouds, so that the Sun of righteousness may shine forth with healing in His beams, making the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Forgiveness is conditional on repentance, which consists in godly sorrow for sin, and the earnest desire and effort to sin no more. The Lord is ever

striving to remove from man the states of falsity and evil which hinder the reception of His grace; but while man continues impenitent the Lord cannot work effectually to this end. It is only when man resists in himself all that is displeasing to the Lord, and submits willingly to the Divine operation, that the power of the Lord is effectual to remove as a thick cloud his transgressions and as a cloud his sins, so far as to leave him open to the influence of saving grace. Hence the apostle says, "*Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*"

With repentance must be joined prayer. Prayer for pardon does not change the mind of God toward us—for that is love itself, unchangeable love; but prayer is needed to promote such a change in us as will fit us to receive the gift. States of evil, inherited from birth, have become inrooted in us by actual transgressions. They constitute the cloud that is to be blotted out. In praying God to pardon us, we ask Him to exercise His mercy, not by changing His feelings towards us, but by removing those evils which hide His face from us and separate between us and Him.

Forgiveness is not the utter extinction of our sinful dispositions, for these still remain, notwithstanding our repentance. The lusts, the evil dispositions which prompted us to sin, are by forgiveness so far removed as to cease to be obstacles to our receiving

light and life from the Lord; but the fight with our evils, the combat with our long-cherished and often-indulged inclinations, still lies before us. Indeed forgiveness is but the blessed beginning of the work of Divine grace in the soul. It opens the soul which has been long shut against the pleadings of Divine love and mercy, so that the Lord may enter into it, take possession of it, and therein fight mightily until every enemy is subdued and cast down under the Lord's feet. The soul has previously become a wilderness, because the light and heat of the Sun of righteousness have been prevented from reaching it; and now the curse of its barrenness is to be taken away, and it has to be made to "*bring forth fruit with patience.*"

Forgiveness brings to us deliverance from the powers of hell. There is an universal law of affinity as operative in spiritual as in natural things, by which like is drawn to and conjoined with like. Every evil desire, ever sinful thought, and every wicked deed brings the soul into association with infernal beings in whom a like form of evil predominates. To cherish evil is to attract to ourselves infernal beings, whose chief delight is in that particular evil so cherished. The Lord, by forgiving a man, by blotting out, as a thick cloud, his transgressions, and as a cloud his sins, casts the devils out. The man's moral freedom is restored, and now he can sit at the feet of his Saviour "*clothed and in his*

right mind." This deliverance is implied in the text "*Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.*" Before this is accomplished we may indeed desire and strive to return; but not until we are redeemed from the hand of the enemy can we actually return to the Lord with full purpose of heart.

Forgiveness is the beginning of salvation. It is the first completed stage in the pilgrimage of regeneration, whence we may prosecute our journey to the Canaan of our longing hopes. Freed from infernal bondage, from association with evil spirits, we are admitted into communion with the Lord and into association with angels; for we "*are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect*" (Heb. xii. 22, 23). The blessings of Christ's redemption have become ours; the fuller processes of salvation now lie before us. *By forgiveness we become receptive of Divine influences essential to salvation;* but salvation depends on our use of the influences so received. We are armed for the good fight of faith, and Christ is willing and able to make us more than conquerors; we are delivered out of the hands of our enemies, and now we may serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

PRAYER.

All-merciful and ever-gracious Lord, who art the Sun of righteousness seeking to shine upon our souls, to enlighten our minds and to vivify our hearts with light and life from Thyself, we desire to approach Thy mercy-seat with deep penitence and humble trust. We thank Thee for the blessed assurances of Thy mercy and loving-kindness; for Thy gracious readiness to raise up those that are fallen, to pardon those that are penitent, and to reveal Thyself to those who desire to see Thee that they may love and serve Thee.

We acknowledge our sins; our transgressions are manifold. As a cloud, and as a thick cloud, they have come between us and Thee. Intercepting the light of Thy Divine truth and the warmth of Thy Divine love, they have produced in us darkness of understanding, coldness of heart, and barrenness of life. Our only hope is in Thee, O Lord. Help us to see our sinfulness, and to feel that godly sorrow that worketh repentance to salvation. Blot out, as a thick cloud, our transgressions, and as a cloud our sins. Deliver us from our spiritual enemies, and incline us to return unto Thee. Redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto Thyself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

Give us of Thine own peace, O Lord, and fill us with the joy of those whose transgression is for-

given and whose sin is covered. Increase our lov for Thee, our gratitude towards Thee, our desire t walk before Thee blameless, and our zeal to do goo and to bring others to the saving knowledge o Thee. Feeling that our sins, which are many, ar forgiven, may we go and sin no more, and wall before Thee in holiness and righteousness all ou days.

All this we ask, O merciful Saviour, in Thy ow name and for Thy loving-kindness' sake. *Amen.*

CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."—*Romans* viii. 16.

THE assurance which every true penitent must earnestly desire is, that his sins are forgiven. When Jesus was on earth, He said to the sick of the palsy, "*Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee*" (Matt. ix. 2); to the guilty but penitent woman, "*Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more*" (John viii. 11); to the Magdalene, who anointed His feet with the ointment and wiped them with the hairs of her head, "*Thy sins are forgiven*" (Luke vii. 48). These penitents could remember and rely on His gracious words. Believing in Him as the Saviour who had "*power on earth to forgive sins,*" they could feel an unshaken and unshakable assurance that they were indeed forgiven. To say that we can have no sufficient assurance of our forgiveness would be to assert that those sinners were better off than we can be. It would be to say that while it was the blessed privilege of such penitents to love much, because to them much had been forgiven; we, who like them had been forgiven much, are, unlike them, denied the assurance which

would beget in us like gratitude and love. So far is this from being true, that the apostle bases the obligation of Christians to forgive one another on the fact that they themselves had been forgiven of God: "*Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven you*" (Eph. iv. 32). It is evident that this precept was addressed to those who knew themselves to be forgiven.

By forgiveness, the Lord blots out as a thick cloud our transgressions and as a cloud our sins, opening our souls to the inflowing of light and life from Himself. As then by forgiveness we become receptive of the Spirit, so the highest and most direct testimony to the fact of our forgiveness is the witness of the Spirit—"*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*" (Rom. viii. 16).

The meaning of this is not that the Spirit of God assures us of forgiveness and of our adoption into the family of God by immediate revelation of the fact, but that *by His quickening presence in our souls He awakens in us the consciousness of spiritual life.* Our consciousness of natural life is the assurance to us that we live. We need no argument to convince ourselves of our own existence. And just as the soul is conscious of natural life, so it may and ought to become conscious of spiritual life. This opening in man of a new consciousness—a consciousness of

new states, new thoughts, new feelings, new desires and inclinations—is the highest and most internal evidence of forgiveness; it proves to us beyond the reach of argument or of doubt, that we are indeed "*passed from death unto life,*" that we are made new creatures in Christ Jesus our Lord. Hence the Divine process of regeneration is described as "quickening." "*You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins . . . God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ*" (Eph. ii. 1, 4, 5). Those who are naturally quickened are conscious of their own existence. The difference between the quick and the dead is to be found in the consciousness of the quick and the unconsciousness of the dead. So also those who have been spiritually quickened are, in the degree of their reception of spiritual life from the Lord, conscious of their spiritual existence. This consciousness of spiritual life is the witness of the Spirit with our spirit; it is the supreme proof to us that we are forgiven, and adopted into the family of God.

Besides this, the more interior testimony and ground of assurance, applicable more especially to the higher forms of Christian experience, there is also a subordinate and less interior testimony which all Christians may receive. It furnishes additional and confirmatory evidence to those already conscious

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of spiritual life. It supplies a means of testing the genuineness of that consciousness. It affords a lower ground of assurance to those who have not yet attained that deep and abiding consciousness which leaves no room for doubt. It is to this testimony that St. Paul refers, when he says, "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves*" (2 Cor. xiii. 5).

When we thus examine ourselves by the rule of God's commandments, and find, notwithstanding manifold imperfections, that we have indeed entered upon and are advancing in the life of sonship towards God and brotherhood towards man; then we have proof, according to our state, that the Lord is working in us to bring us to the full consciousness of spiritual life. The budding of the tree is a proof that the tree is living. Its bringing forth good fruit is the proof that its life is healthy and good. We know that without the Lord we can do nothing. If then we can trace growth and progress in ourselves, we know that it is of the Lord, and that it is the pledge that we are accepted by Him.

We may thus have *direct assurance* of forgiveness, in the consciousness of spiritual life; and *inferential assurance* from what we learn of ourselves, by examination of our hearts and lives. The latter is the lower state, because it implies the necessity of an act of reasoning; the former is the higher state, because in the direct testimony of consciousness

there is no reasoning needed or performed. Conscious of spiritual life, we know that we are the children of God: we know that we are forgiven, and are passed from death unto life; we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Beware, however, of a serious error. The fact that we are now the children of God does not give us assurance that we must necessarily be saved. We may fall back unto perdition. It is possible to make spiritual shipwreck. We have become the elect of God, but the necessity is upon us to make our calling and election sure. The apostle who had been the means of helping so many to life, needed to take care lest he himself should become a castaway. The gift of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, does not destroy the original liberty of turning to evil, if we so will. "*Those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,*" even those may fall away. The notion that "once a child of God, always a child of God," the doctrine of "final perseverance," as it is termed, may easily become a pitfall, a dangerous delusion, and a snare into which the over-confident may fall. The admonition of the apostle is most pertinent here, "*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in*

any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end" (Heb. iii. 12–14).

PRAYER.

Infinite and adorable Lord God Almighty, who didst condescend to man's low estate, and didst appear on earth to be the Redeemer and Saviour of Thy creatures; Thou alone art the Source of every good. From Thee alone proceed the natural life which we possess, and the spiritual life which we may enjoy. Thou art the forgiver of sin, the blotter out of iniquity and transgression. Thou dost continually operate by Thy Holy Spirit to speak peace to troubled consciences, and to bind up the wounded hearts.

We humbly beceech Thee to give unto us the sweet assurance of Thy favour, which is better than life. Make us willing for Thy sake to lose our merely natural life of selfishness and sin, that we may find in Thee our spiritual life of joy and peace. Grant unto us to know that we are indeed forgiven. May love and light flow into our souls from Thee, so that Thy Spirit may bear witness with our spirits that we are Thy children. Quicken our souls with life from Thyself, that we may know of a surety

that we have passed from death unto life. Make us conscious of new and pure affections, of new and holy desires, of new and joy-inspiring thoughts. Increase within us the wish to follow Thee and to become like Thee. May our obedience to Thy law become more and more delightful to us, and our victories in temptation become more and more complete.

While we bless Thee for the progress Thou hast already enabled us to make, we entreat Thee to keep us humble. Help us to watch and pray, lest the enemy get an advantage over us. Guard us from vain confidence, and deliver us from all trust in ourselves. Thou hast given unto us the beginning of our confidence, O grant unto us Thy constant grace that we may hold it steadfast unto the end. Thus fit us for the blessed time when Thou wilt receive us into Thy heavenly kingdom as heirs and joint-heirs with Thee, to the honour and glory of Thy holy name. *Amen.*

THE PROVIDENTIAL PURPOSE OF AFFLICTION.

"Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness."—*Hebrews* xii. 5, 6, 9, 10.

IT is often very hard to realize that the all-loving and all-wise providence of God is over each of His creatures, in every place and at every moment of their lives. When any one has been wonderfully preserved from a great calamity, helped in some unlooked-for way, or raised by unforeseen events to great prosperity, we frequently hear it said that such circumstances were providential. Hence we hear of providential escapes, providential interpositions, providential occurrences, and the like. It is quite right to ascribe every good thing to God. But if we think that Providence is not just as operative in our sorrows as in our joys, in our disappointments as in our successes, in our adversity as in our prosperity, we certainly err. We must not so limit God's operation as to say

that His providence was over the one man who escaped from a wreck, and not over the one hundred who were drowned; or that it was over those who came out of the battle unwounded, and not over the thousands who were left on the field. God's providence has no exceptions, but is over all; and it is not merely a general providence, but embraces every particular of time, circumstance, and state, throughout the life of every man, woman, and child.

There are three things we should always remember in striving to discern the hand of Divine providence.

The *first* thing to remember is—that the good Father has one abiding, unchangeable purpose concerning us, which is to fit us for heavenly peace and light and joy while we are here, and afterwards to receive us to Himself. All the discipline of life has this ulterior purpose. *That* is a mercy and a blessing which best fits us for heaven, which is best suited to the state of the soul at that particular time at which it is given. God is the Eternal; He ever has eternal ends in view; all His dealings with us are to be judged of in relation to these eternal ends.

The *second* thing to remember is—that the Lord has made all men free, and continually preserves their freedom. Hence men in the exercise of this freedom, by transgressing the laws of Divine order, may bring much sorrow and misery upon themselves. They may also bring misery and misfortune upon

their children, in diseased and enfeebled bodies, in neglected minds, in necessitous circumstances. To prevent this would be to interfere with man's freedom, which the Lord never does.

The *third* thing to remember is—that all pain, sorrow, and misery are not arbitrary inflictions, but results of transgressing natural and spiritual laws, on obedience to which our well-being and happiness depend. They are permitted in order to prevent worse evils. If sin did not bring punishment, to what depths of wickedness would men sink? If folly did not entail distress and suffering, how would men be ever urged to grow wise? If forgetfulness of God did not often cause us to fall, how should we learn to live in humble dependence upon Him?

These thoughts will help us to understand and to trust in the good providence of God. If He permits sorrow and affliction to overtake us, it is for wise and good ends—firstly, to prevent us becoming worse; secondly, to dispose us to return unto the Lord, so that we may become better.

Almost the only means by which the Lord can make us shun evil, is to make us feel how terrible a thing evil is. Thus He wisely leads us to fear evil, and afterwards to hate it. It is hateful to Him, not merely because of its contrariety to His own nature, but because it is injurious to us. We have to learn how injurious a thing it is, before we can be induced

to hate it. The chastening that teaches us to hate evil, that teaches us to feel how necessary God is to us, and how foolish and vain it is to rely upon ourselves, is both wise and good. It is wise, because it is the best and most effectual means of bringing us to the Lord. It is good, because it is intended to make us purer and better than we are.

We should not have been chastened, if we had not merited chastisement. We should not have been rebuked, if we had not done something worthy of rebuke. The chastening and the rebuke should lead us to examine into our hearts and lives, to see what evil affections we have cherished, and what evil actions we have done. Not only should we not murmur, but we should humble ourselves before the Lord, confess our sins and follies, and pray for the Divine forgiveness, and for wisdom and strength not to offend again.

The apostle goes further. He teaches that chastenings and rebukes are proofs of the love of God towards us: "*For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.*" Why does a human father take so much pains with his children? Why is he sometimes compelled to use the rod? Why does he sometimes permit his child to exercise his freedom, even though it bring suffering on his child? There is but one answer—because the father loves and cares for his child. He desires to see him become an industrious, in-

telligent, and exemplary youth, and afterwards a wise and good and useful man. So also, because God so loves us, He strives with us by His Spirit, bears with our infirmities, permits our sins to punish us, suffers our errors and follies to bring pain to us, and all this that He may develop the powers which He has given us, and prepare us for the joy He has provided. He chastens us "*for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.*"

To chasten, consequently, does not mean merely to punish. It also implies the object of such punishment, namely, to purify from all evil, and to correct from all error. The whole of our life-discipline has this object. When joys come to us, they are the good gifts of God to encourage us on our path, and to make us feel that truly God is good to those who love and serve Him. But an unchanging state of joy is not possible on earth as it now is, because evil and error are here. The soul must have its midnight hours as well as the sunlit seasons of joy and gladness. Still the mercy of the Lord is shown as much in the night as in the day. It is only in the night that we can see the stars. It is only in our sorrowful and afflicted states that we can learn the real value of the precious truths and consolations of God's holy Word. If we were never hungry, we should never appreciate the blessing of food. Feeling empty-hearted and desolate is the soul's hunger. If it leads us to desire and to seek for spiritual food,

the bread of life which cometh down from heaven, it is a blessed hunger. They that feel such hunger as this shall be filled by the Lord.

So then, if we are made to feel the insufficiency of this world to satisfy us, the instability of all earthly things, the pang and misery of evil, and our own utter weakness without the help that cometh from above, the lessons taught us in the school of suffering are both wise and good. They are afflictions doubtless, but still they are blessings in disguise. They rebuke us, but they also chasten us; they purge and cleanse and purify our souls.

PRAYER.

O Lord, our heavenly Father, who dost love us with a boundless love, and who dost care for us with a perfect wisdom; we bless Thee for the precious truths and consolations of Thy holy Word. In all Thy providences Thou art full of tenderness and compassion; Thou dost intend our real and everlasting good. Thou dost not permit us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear; Thou givest unto us strength according to our needs.

We are not worthy of the least of Thy mercies. We are too prone to murmur at Thy chastening, and to faint at Thy rebukes. Too often do we distrust Thy willingness and Thy power to save; too often do we forget Thy loving purpose in our afflictions—to conform us to Thine own Divine image

and to fit us for Thy heavenly kingdom. Pardon our sinful doubts, we beseech Thee: remove our disquietudes and fears. Subdue every proud and rebellious thought within us; enable us in every visitation to see Thy hand, and to submit to Thy will.

According to Thy good pleasure do Thou unto us. Give us strength to bear the cross and to drink of the cup. Let patience have its perfect work. Fit us more and more for that state in which sorrow can no more come to us, where Thou wilt wipe away all tears from our eyes, and where shall be only joy and gladness everlasting. And to Thee, O blessed Lord and Saviour, will we ascribe all glory and honour and might and majesty and dominion, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.

"We have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—*Hebrews* iv. 15, 16.

WE have all felt the sweet comfort which sympathy gives. To tell our troubles to those who have never been troubled is weary work. Only those who have sorrowed can fully sympathise with those who are sorrowing. When we know that the friend whom we consult in our trials has been more deeply tried than ourselves, we can approach him with confidence. We can be sure he will understand us, feel for us, help us. We are neither ashamed to tell our trouble, nor afraid that he will despise us or be indifferent to us. When our friend tells us what he has gone through in order to make us feel free to tell him everything, how it adds to our power of unbosoming ourselves before him!

Just such a sweet provocative to confidence does the apostle supply us in the text. He is showing us why we may be bold in coming to the throne of grace, there to obtain mercy and to find grace to

help in time of need. The chief reason he gives is that our dear Lord and Saviour has suffered more than we all.

Jesus is our great "*High-Priest.*" As the high-priests among the Jews offered sacrifice to God for the sins of the people, so Jesus offered Himself as a holy and acceptable sacrifice to God for the sins of the world. The whole of His life was one continuous sacrifice—a making of Himself holy unto God, until, by His bitter passion and death, His human nature was fully consecrated, sanctified, and hallowed by perfect union with His Divinity; so that henceforth through the fellowship of His sufferings and conformity to His death, all men might be made holy unto the Lord, as He Himself says: "*For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth*" (John xvii. 19). And He was not only the sacrifice offered, but He was also the High-Priest offering the sacrifice. All the types of the Old Testament meet in the Saviour. Prophets, priests, and kings all represent the Lord, the "*Word made flesh,*" in some aspect of His character or His work. He was the sacrifice for sin, because He was offered unto God. He was also the High-Priest, because the sacrifice was offered by Himself: "*For such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins,*

and then for the people's: for this He did once, when He offered up Himself" (Heb. vii. 26, 27).

This great High-Priest can "*be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.*" He is full of compassion, tenderness, and mercy. He has borne our iniquities and carried our sorrows. In His own experience He has proved the infirmities of man; therefore having Himself suffered in our nature, He is able to sympathise with us, and not only to sympathise but also effectually to help: "*For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted*" (Heb. ii. 18). It is as though the Lord had cried to us, saying, "O all ye that sorrow, come to me, for I too have wept! O all ye that suffer, come to me, for I too have suffered!" He might thus address the hungry, the burdened, the bowed down, the desolate; for He has passed through all such trials, borne all uncomplainingly; and when cruel and wicked men crucified Him, He prayed, "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!*"

He "*was in all points tempted like as we are.*" This is a very large statement. Of course it was the Lord's human nature that was tempted, "*for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man*" (Jas. i. 13). The human nature "*made of a woman, made under the law*" (Gal. iv. 4), the Son of Mary "*made in all things like unto His brethren*" (Heb. ii. 17), bore all the temptations to which man

is liable. All the powers of darkness, all the enemies of man's soul, were let loose against Him. He triumphed over all. Assailed at every point to which the tempter has access in ourselves, He conquered all our foes and redeemed us from their power.

For though in all points tempted like as we are, He was "*yet without sin.*" This shows the completeness of His triumph. But if the temptations which He endured were like those to which we are exposed, then like as He "*spoiled principalities and powers, triumphing over them in Himself*" (Col. ii. 15), so He will enable us to resist the devil that he may flee from us: "*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil*" (1 John iii. 8). Like as He overcame, He will enable us to overcome, and will at length fulfil in us the promise, "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne*" (Rev. iii. 21).

Here then are the grounds of our confidence. He is our great High-Priest, to whom we can come. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He will give us strength to resist the tempter, even as He did; to overcome evil, even as He did; to become children of God and joint-heirs with Himself. He knows our wants, our woes, and

sorrows; and His power to help and bless is as infinite as His love.

In view of these things we may well "*come boldly to the throne of grace;*" we may well have confidence and hope. It is just because we are so poor and so needy that Jesus has compassion on us; it is because we are so weary and heavy laden that He bids us come to Him for rest. The promise also justifies boldness—ye shall "*obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*" He will pardon our sins; He will give us help that we may "*go and sin no more.*" When such gracious and tender promises do so abound, is it not strange and hard that all will not go to Him and live?

PRAYER.

Ever blessed and adorable Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art our great High-Priest, who hast offered Thyself an all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Having been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, Thou canst be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Having Thyself suffered being tempted, Thou art able to succour them that are tempted. We are made bold by Thine exceeding mercy to approach Thy throne of grace, knowing that Thou wilt not rebuke us for our unworthiness nor cast out any that come to Thee for help.

O Lamb of God that takest away the sin of the

world, have mercy upon us. Thou knowest our weakness and our wants; grant to us Thy all-sufficient grace, that fainting not by the way we may press forward with ever renewed earnestness to the prize of our high calling. If suffering be needful for us, let Thy patience be in us, and let patience have its perfect work. In all our sorrows help us to look unto Thee who wast a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and find Thee mighty to succour and to save. And teach us ever to remember that this is not our rest, that here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come—even a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Therefore may we look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; that when our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we may have prepared for us of Thee a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

And to Thee, the God of all grace, be ascribed all praise and honour and glory, for ever. *Amen.*

ALL THINGS WORKING TOGETHER FOR GOOD.

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."—*Romans* viii. 28.

THE difference between a true Christian and an unbeliever is so great that even in the most ordinary affairs of life it may be clearly seen. The unbeliever does not see God in anything. If he is successful in worldly affairs, he praises his own cleverness; if unsuccessful, he blames something that he calls "his luck;" if a pleasant surprise comes to him, it is "a happy chance;" if an unexpected disappointment, it is "a heavy blow," borne impatiently and often cursed. Severe sorrows may well wither up his soul, for there is but little to alleviate them. Prolonged misery may well sink him to the grave, for there he may fancy is rest, and beyond he has no hope. *The true Christian discerns the hand of the Lord in all things.* He believes that nothing can happen but what is known to God, and is permitted or appointed by God for some good end. He is confident that even the evils which he sees, or from which he suffers, are permitted only in order to prevent the existence of still greater evils. There

is evil enough in the world, but there might easily be more. The reason why there is not more evil than now exists is because of the over-ruling Providence of God, who hath "*set bounds to the sea that it cannot pass over.*" He perceives that God has in times past made even wicked men instruments for promoting His Divine purposes. He has taught men to love peace by the horrors of war; led nations to greater freedom by means of the oppression of tyrants; induced men to become wise by experience of the sorrows which ignorance has brought upon them; and by the penalties of vice He has whipped men into desiring virtue.

Recognising the overruling providence of God in all events, harmonizing the two great Divine purposes, namely, the preservation to all men of the sacred possession of liberty to choose either the evil or the good, and at the same time to lead them in freedom to the love and practice of goodness, the Christian learns the beautiful and consoling lesson of *trust in the love and mercy of God.* For if the providence of God is over all things; if He feeds the ravens when they cry; if not even a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge and permission; if He clothes the lily of the field with beauty, and gives to the rose its sweetness,—then, indeed, may we who are "*much better than they*" trust in Him as to our own selves.

The ground of true Christian trust is stated by

the apostle in the text: "*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.*"

This does not say that those who love God will always be kept from doing most foolish and even wicked acts. The possibility of falling must ever in this world go side by side with the possibility of rising. We are ever maintained in a state of spiritual freedom, and while here we may sin if we so choose, or obey if we so will.

Nor does the text say that if those who love God do foolish and wicked things, they shall not suffer the penalty attached by an all-wise God to deeds of folly and wickedness. It would not be merciful if folly did not bring loss and pain; if sin did not bring misery and remorse. By the discipline of suffering the Lord strives to lead men to wisdom and goodness. A Christian can no more transgress the laws of health with impunity than can an unbeliever. Idleness in a Christian will bring him to poverty and want, just as it would an unbeliever. Neglecting properly to educate, to feed, or to clothe his children, will be every whit as disastrous to a Christian as to an unbeliever. Indeed, it is hard to see how a man can be a true Christian and neglect any duty that is obvious to all. He may, however, err from ignorance; and if he does so err, the text does not promise that he shall be exempted from the consequences of the error.

But the text does promise this: that if a man

truly loves God and continues to love God, *then*, whatever may befal him—prosperity or adversity, pleasure or pain, sorrow or joy—all shall work together for his good. It does not say that the Christian shall have no troubles; it does say that his troubles shall be made a blessing to him. It does not say that the Christian shall not prosper in the world; it does say that prosperity shall promote his usefulness in this world, and his fitness for the world to come.

What is that which is truly the "*good*" of a man? A worldly-minded man might say that wealth, influence, power, and pleasure are the best things a man could have. But if the possession of these made a man careless, indifferent, negligent of the higher interests of his soul, they would be the worst things that he could have. Too many, alas, set time against eternity, and choose time; balance worldly pleasures against eternal happiness, and prefer worldly pleasures. Men like themselves may deem them wise; but what do the angels think? What does the Lord say about such a choice? "*What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" (Mark viii. 36.) The apostle is speaking of that which is the highest "*good*," the real, the best interest of man. This is, peace in the conscience, contentment in the heart whether with little or much, perfect trust in the love and mercy of God, the precious blessing of

a soul full of quiet joy springing from a deep and abiding love,—these things while we live here, and hereafter endless happiness. To gain these would be for the man to gain *good*. It would be to secure the possession of good here, which would fit the soul to receive greater good hereafter. To those who truly love God, all things that happen to them will thus work together for their good. This is the promise.

Trouble may come to us; but if we love God and go on loving Him, trouble will purify our souls. It will show us our errors, that we may shun them. It will reveal to us our littleness and our weakness, to make us humble. It will discover to us our sins, that we may repent of them.

Prosperity may come to us; but, if we continue in the love of God, it will help us to be more useful servants of Christ. We shall be enabled to possess our riches without pride; to gratify our innocent tastes and yet not fix our affections on things below; to be charitable without ostentation; to exercise an influence for good, and yet to be humble before God; to remember that the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and that we are stewards who will have to give an account of our stewardship. The spiritual dangers of affliction are manifold; the spiritual dangers of riches are manifold more. But to him who loves God, both affliction and prosperity shall promote his real and everlasting good.

PRAYER.

Almighty and most gracious Lord, all Thy ways are dictated by infinite love, and guided by infinite wisdom. Thou wilt withhold no good thing from those who truly love and serve Thee. Thou wilt order their ways in righteousness, and lead them in the paths of peace. Thou knowest our down-sitting and our uprising. We cannot flee from Thy presence, nor go beyond Thy Fatherly care. Thou dost feed the ravens when they cry, and dost clothe the lilies of the field. Not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without Thy permission. We bless Thy name for those sweet assurances of Thy providence. Help us to discern it more plainly, to see Thy hand in all things, to know that it is over us for our good.

Help us, we beseech Thee, to love Thee with our whole heart. Give unto us that heavenly wisdom which shall enable us to see how loveworthy Thou art. Reveal unto us Thy goodness and Thy grace. Manifest Thy love unto us, that seeing Thou hast first loved us, we may love Thee in return. Beget in us a perfect trust, an abiding confidence. Enable us to cast all our care upon Thee who carest for us. In times of trouble be Thou near unto us to help us. Comfort our hearts in times of sorrow and distress. Speak peace to the storms of our life. Give us strength to bear with patience what Thou seest best

for us to endure. In times of prosperity and in seasons of joy help us to remember Thee the Giver of all good. Guard us from all pride and haughtiness of spirit, and keep us humble before Thee. Deeply impress upon us that all things work together for good to them that love Thee; and help us to abide in Thy love unto our life's end.

All these mercies we ask, blessed and adorable Saviour, in Thine own Name and for Thy loving-kindness' sake. *Amen.*

THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS.

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son."—*Colossians* i. 12, 13.

WHY has the Lord revealed so little in the Scriptures concerning the heavenly habitations which He has prepared for His people? Doubtless, this question has occurred to many minds. It is but natural that we should desire to know much about the angels, and that we should sometimes speculate about them—their appearance, their clothing, their habitations, their worship, their employments; whether they speak and write as we do, and have the same revealed Word; whether they eat, drink, and sleep; what is their sense of time or of duration, of space or of extension; what is the character of the scenery of their blessed abodes. When we call to mind beloved friends who have departed from earth full of hope and joy, and we can confidently believe that they are among the saved, we cannot but ask ourselves—What is their present state, who are their companions, what are they doing, did they meet and recognise their

friends who had gone before them, and are they with them now? It is neither weak nor wicked to have such thoughts, nor to carefully "*search the Scriptures*" with a view to meditate upon the very few statements therein which seem at all to throw a gleam of light upon such subjects.

The most cursory examination of Scripture teachings about heaven will convince us that very much more is written concerning the *moral character* of those who inhabit the heavens than about the external appearance of the heavens. Heaven is presented to the mind of the student of the Bible rather as a *state* than as a *place*. Hence we read much more of the peace and joy, the love and intelligence, the purity and holiness, of the saints in bliss, than of their habitations and employments. This is so markedly the case that we are obliged to recognise the Divine wisdom which so ordered it. The manifest purpose of God is to inspire us with the desire to become heavenly-minded, rather than to gratify any merely intellectual curiosity concerning heaven; to impress us with the knowledge of what constitutes heaven as a state of the soul, rather than to charm and dazzle us with the knowledge of the glories which are there visible. We learn, consequently, with great force and clearness, what is needful to prepare us for heaven; while the beauties and delights of heaven are only dimly and incidentally pictured to our minds. Thus a moral turn

is given to all instruction contained in the sacred volume on this subject; and our meditations thereon become truly profitable to our souls.

There may possibly have been a wise reason for this absence of information, arising from the state of those to whom the Word was given, rendering them unable to understand, to appreciate, or to receive such information. Only those who are heavenly-minded can rightly understand any description of heaven. Hence the grand object of the Scriptures is to enable us to become heavenly-minded. Only an apostle like St. Paul might be caught up to the third heaven, and there hear unspeakable words, and no doubt gaze on indescribable things (2 Cor. xii. 1–4). Only an apostle like St. John could be intromitted into the spiritual world, and there behold the wonders recorded in the Apocalypse. The more practical and the more salutary instructions concerning the moral quality of heaven were intended for all mankind. Hence heaven is presented to us in general terms as the abode of loving, intelligent, and active beings, where every good desire finds its fullest joy. The truth which we here learn in part we shall there learn in fulness. The love which we here feel will there be amplified and deepened. The active powers which here have only a limited field, a straitened ability, and a temporary use, shall there obtain a wider field, a larger ability, and an endless exercise. Universal

beauty will there be seen, because universal order shall prevail. No sorrow shall be there, and no night. There will be perfect harmony between the inward states of the saints in bliss and all things that surround them. It is true that the scenery of heaven, the music of heaven, the songs of heaven, the joys of heaven, surpass our power to understand them; but the Scripture references to these, even in the literal sense, have their use in appealing to our best feelings, picturing to us ideas of blessedness, and presenting the Author and Giver of this bliss as indeed worthy of our adoration and love. Thus although not much is revealed, we may still know enough to make us give "*thanks unto the Father*" who has prepared such happiness for His children.

If we thank Him for this token of His mercy, how much more do we owe Him thanks for having "*made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*" To have provided heaven for us is much: to have prepared us for heaven is more. We become fitted to enjoy heaven by learning to delight in heavenly things. The process by which this preparation is effected is regeneration. It consists in the reception of heavenly love and wisdom from the Lord, in the formation in man of a truly heavenly character, so that all the aspirations and delights of the soul shall become heavenly. Heaven would only be a place of misery to those who felt no joy in

heavenly delights. Indeed it is easy to conceive that to those who are destitute of truth and goodness, and confirmed in falsity and evil, heaven would be even more painful, terrible, and horrible than hell. To drunkards, to the licentious, to the covetous, to the revengeful, the society of the temperate, the pure, the generous, and the merciful is ever a source of discomfort, and even pain. They desire even here to flee from such, and to associate with their like. Death, which is merely the putting off of the material body, makes no change in a man's ruling loves. How needful then it is that we should be made "*meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*"

In order to be prepared for the inheritance in light, we must first be delivered from "*the power of darkness,*" that is, from bondage to evil spirits, elsewhere called "*the rulers of the darkness of this world*" (Eph. vi. 12). Infernal spirits excite our hereditary dispositions and tendencies to sin; and every sin strengthens the evil disposition, and roots it more deeply in the soul. As the disposition grows stronger it is more easily excited, and its excitements are more terrible, thus giving to infernal spirits a continually increasing power over us. They rule us through our vices, and as we become more vicious we become more enslaved. Thus the phrase, "*the power of darkness,*" indicates a fearful fact in the experience of man.

It is the Lord who alone can deliver us. He alone can break our bondage and redeem us from the hand of our enemies. This He does by the means of truth, enabling us to see our bondage and to desire to be free, enabling us to conceive of a state of liberty and to desire to attain it. Moved by this desire we are led to "*resist the devil,*" to shun evil because it is a sin against the Lord as well as destructive to ourselves. The Lord then removes the evil affections and implants the opposite good affections in their stead; the powers of darkness recede, and the angels of the Lord's kingdom approach and minister unto us.

It is thus we are "*turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God:*" or, as the text expresses it, we are "*delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.*" The kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ is *within.* It is an inward reign of righteousness, love, joy, and peace. It is a heavenly kingdom set up in the soul, the life of which is love, and the laws of which are righteousness. They in whom this heavenly kingdom is set up are "*made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*" Carrying heaven within them here, they can enter into heaven hereafter. The Lord has begun the good work in them, and He will complete it in the day when that which is perfect shall come, and that which is in part shall be done away.

PRAYER.

O God, our Father in Christ Jesus, who in Thy great love to mankind didst give Thy only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life; we desire to render unto Thee most humble and hearty thanks for all Thy mercies, but specially for the work of Thy grace in our souls, and for the hope of glory which Thou hast given us. Help us to fix our affections on things above. May the contemplation of the blessedness of the saints in light excite in us an earnest longing to partake of their inheritance. Help us to desire Thy light that we may walk therein; so shall we become the children of light, and inherit a mansion in those realms where darkness never comes. So incline our hearts to the love of goodness that we may be ever willing to come to the light, that whatever is evil in us may be reproved.

We have been in bondage unto sin and Satan and have groaned bitterly, desiring Thy redemption. Translate us out of darkness into light, out of evil into goodness, out of the tyranny of hell into the freedom of Thy kingdom; that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies may serve Thee without fear in holiness and righteousness before Thee all the days of our life. May all our troubles wean us from the world, and all our blessings bind us more closely to Thee. And when we have ended

our battle and pilgrimage here below, receive us unto Thy kingdom and rest above, where with all Thy redeemed Church we shall serve and magnify Thee for ever. *Amen.*

THE HIGH AND LOFTY ONE DWELLING WITH THE HUMBLE AND CONTRITE.

"Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."—*Isaiah* lvii. 15.

HOW marvellously is the revelation of God suited to man's nature and wants! While we could not be content to worship a God who was not the Most High, unsearchable in His greatness, surpassing all our conceptions of His majesty, yet we could never venture to worship Him if He were not also infinite in mercy. Hence the Bible reveals to us both the Majesty and the mercy of God. It inspires us with reverence, by showing to us the greatness of God: it inspires us with trust, by showing to us the goodness of God: it emboldens us to come to Him, by revealing His tenderness, compassion, and love. Such a portraiture of Himself has the infinite Lord given to His children in the passage before us.

He is "*the high and lofty One.*" He is the One only God. There is none before Him, and none after Him. He is the First and the Last. He is the

one only Creator, Preserver, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Saviour. All things and beings that exist live from Him. He is the universal Providence, controlling, directing, endowing all things. He is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Heaven is His throne, and earth is His footstool.

He "*inhabiteth eternity.*" "Before Abraham was, I am," said the Lord. He was, ere yet "the stars of the morning sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." Before time began, with the beginning of those things to which time alone belongs, He was. To Him all things are as one eternal *now*. He seeth the end from the beginning. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

His "*Name is Holy.*" His Name does but describe His nature, and that is holiness. Before Him cherubim and seraphim continually do bow, saying, "*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.*" In Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He is the Infinite perfection of Love, Wisdom, and Power.

He dwells "*in the high and holy place.*" The heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. He is the King eternal, immortal, invisible, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see. Jesus Christ ascended "*far above all*

heavens," into this inaccessible glory, because He was the only-begotten Son of God, whom God glorified *with Himself.*

It is impossible to form loftier conceptions of God than the descriptions of Himself which He has given in His Word. Desiring to behold the Majesty of God, we may find it there portrayed, until burdened with the greatness of the thoughts, and appalled by the contrast between the Deity and ourselves, the soul shrinks in the consciousness of its own insignificance, its utter littleness, and wonders how such an august Being as God can be mindful of so small a thing as man. Awed thus by the contemplation of the Divine Majesty, we are prepared to welcome the revelation of the Divine Mercy. This revelation the text supplies.

While God dwells in "the high and holy place," He does not confine His presence there. He would otherwise be a God afar off, altogether inaccessible to man. Hence the merciful condescension of the Lord; for He dwells *"with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit."*

Is it not wonderful that when the infinite Lord wishes to make us most like Himself, He bids us to be *humble;* when the Saviour sought to give to men an overpowering reason why they should come unto Him and find rest for their souls, the most striking justification of their trust which He could give was this: *"For I am meek and lowly in heart."* The

infinite wisdom declaring His humility; the infinite majesty declaring His meekness; the infinite power declaring His lowliness; well may we look upon Jesus, and see in Him the infinite condescension of the Most High.

Has the world made a mistake, then? Is the true ideal of greatness only to be found in deep humility? Is real majesty the meekest? Is it a fact that only he who humbles himself as a little child is exalted to the kingdom of God? It would indeed seem so; for God dwells with the humble and contrite. We spiritually rise the highest when we feel we are the least. When we can feel that we are as nothing and that God is all in all, then God is most fully with us. The humble and the penitent, who know their littleness and who mourn because of their sins, these admit God into their souls. They become great with a real greatness, because they receive of the Spirit of Him who is greater than all.

God dwells with the humble and contrite. When an assembly of such are gathered together in the name of Jesus, He is in the midst of them. Just so far as they are really humble and contrite, so far He is with them. He will be with them in the temple and in the workshop, at sea or on the land, in the palace or in the hovel, in joy or in sorrow. The test of His presence with His Church is the humility and penitence of its members. The proud

drive Him away. He cannot dwell with the impenitent. What solemn lessons do these thoughts suggest!

What does God do in the humble and contrite? For what end does He dwell with them? "*To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*" "To revive" is a strong expression, full of meaning; it signifies to make to live anew, to quicken with new life, to bring back to life. This is what the Lord does in the souls in which He dwells. He causes them to die unto their old life of sin and folly: He quickens them with the new life of love and truth from Himself. Hence regeneration is compared by St. Paul to the resurrection of the soul out of spiritual death into spiritual life: "*You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*" (Eph. ii. 1). To revive the spirit of the humble, is to fill it with the new life of heavenly wisdom; to revive the heart of the contrite, is to fill it with the new life of heavenly love and joy. The greatness and glory of angels is their knowledge and love of God. The real grandeur and glory of man is also the knowledge and love of God, the effect of His illuminating and sanctifying presence in the soul.

PRAYER.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who, while the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, dost

condescend to dwell with the contrite and humble spirit; who, while Thou art hidden from the wise and prudent, dost reveal Thyself unto babes; who, while Thy glories cannot be described by human language nor be understood by human intelligence, dost by the mouths of babes and sucklings show forth Thy praise; we desire to approach Thee, with reverence for Thy Divine Majesty, and with trust in Thy tenderness, compassion, and love.

We cannot see Thee as Thou art, in the ineffable glory and in the inaccessible light; but we bless Thy name that Thou hast so come down to us, that we can behold Thee in Thy only-begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us to draw nigh unto Thee in Thy Divine Humanity, trusting in the gracious promise—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

Make us humble in spirit. Give us to see the low estate to which we have sunk by reason of sin; how blind and poor and naked we are; how far we have wandered from Thy ways. Help us to abase ourselves and to confess our unworthiness to be called Thy children. Cast down in us proud imaginations and every high thing, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Thee.

Make us contrite in heart. Give us not only to see our sins, but to repent of them, to hate them, to forsake them utterly. Enable us in our lives to

show forth Thy praise, and by our good works to glorify Thee our Father in heaven.

Thus fit our souls to be Thy dwelling-place; and being filled with Thy presence here, may we realize in the reception of love and light and joy from Thee that we are Thy children, heirs of Thy kingdom and glory. *Amen.*

JOY IN CHRIST.

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."—1 *Peter* i. 8, 9.

THERE are some who seem to think that the only real things are those of the outer world, things which they hear, see, touch, taste, or smell, and that all things of the inner life are comparatively unreal or imaginary. To such it may be answered—So far is this from being true that, on the contrary, mental things, such as emotions, feelings, desires, thoughts, are in fact the only real things we actually know. When we look at an object, it is not the eye that sees, but the mind that receives an impression by means of the optic nerves. When we touch an object, it is not the hand that feels, but the mind that is conscious of a sensation excited by the nerves of touch. The body of itself sees nothing and feels nothing; it is the mind that sees and feels by means of the body. Hence the perceptions and feelings of the mind are all we are conscious of, and are therefore the only real things to us. This may serve to show that

things spiritual are not only real, but even more real to us than the things of time and space.

There are some, too, so limited in their perceptions, so dwarfed in their sympathies, and so immersed in things present, that they cannot understand how rational men and women can love some one they have never seen, believe in things they have never witnessed, joy in what took place many hundreds of years ago. They may be well and properly answered that those who thus "*walk by faith and not by sight,*" give, by so doing, the very best proof that they are truly rational men and women. If we could love only those whom we have seen, or believe only what our own eyes have witnessed, or take pleasure only in what has happened during our own lives, we should indeed be stunted and miserable creatures. We accept by far the greater part of what we believe on the testimony of others. Our love is drawn out towards numbers of good and great men of whom we have only heard or read. Our own thoughts cause us joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain, even though they are about things we have never seen.

Hence the apostle's statement can be true for all, and it is true for many of us. We have not seen the Lord Jesus with our bodily eyes, and yet we truly and deeply love Him. We believe that He really lived on this earth, on the testimony of those who saw and knew Him; and we believe the de-

scriptions given by them of His character and of His work. We believe that the doctrines He is said to have taught, and the merciful promises He is said to have uttered, were really taught and uttered by Him. We have examined those doctrines by the aid of all the mental light we had or could obtain, and believe them to be true; we have tested those promises in part, and have realized the fulfilment of many of them in our own consciences and hearts. We have endeavoured to form a correct judgment as to His character, as to His claims, and as to His work; and we are convinced that His character is perfect, that His claims to be "*God manifest in the flesh*" are true claims, and that His work is a Divine work, full of tenderness, mercy, compassion, and love. While we contemplate His character and work; while we think of the sweet consolations which His teachings afford us; while we are thereby enabled to see our own sinful state, to deplore, confess, and repent of our sins; while we try Him whether He is true and faithful, and whether He will indeed give peace and the assurance of pardon, and help against all evil unto those who come unto Him; while we remember how in our own case the promise has been fulfilled,—how can we help loving Him? It must have been a precious privilege to have seen and known the Lord in the flesh; yet even had this privilege been ours, it could hardly have helped us to know Him better or to love Him more.

It is quite possible that we are even better off than most of those who saw and knew the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. We have the advantage of seeing Him, as it were, through the eyes of several of His disciples. In the Gospels and in the Epistles we have a more comprehensive view of Him than any one of His personal disciples could have had. St. Mark supplements St. Matthew; St. Luke adds other incidents and discourses; St. John supplies much that the other three evangelists omit. St. Peter's view, St. James' view, St. Paul's view of the Divine Man and of His gospel have all come down to us. The testimony of any one of these would have been sufficient to justify faith; but we are all the richer for having the testimony and the descriptions of all. Thus although we have never seen the Lord, we have more reason to believe in Him and to love Him than was possible to those of His disciples who had seen Him. This is no new doctrine; for all agree that posterity can better judge of the greatest men than can their contemporaries.

We can love Him though unseen. His wondrous love for us, which grows larger to our minds the more we contemplate it, can draw forth our love. His matchless mercy can move our gratitude. To experience in ourselves the riches of His grace, makes us cast ourselves at His feet, to bless and praise and adore Him. We see Him by the eyes

of faith; we feel Him to be near to us by the operation within us of His Spirit. The distance of nearly twenty centuries seems to disappear, and Jesus becomes indeed "Emmanuel, God *with us*."

This belief in Jesus and this love for Jesus fills us with "*joy unspeakable and full of glory*." Every element of joy enters into this rejoicing. We joy because we who were in mental darkness have seen the light; because we have been delivered from the power of evil; because we shall be delivered from the punishment of sin; because this great salvation is offered unto all, and may be received by all. We joy because the highest desires of our souls may now be gratified,—the desire to know God, to love God, to feel that we are loved and cared for by God; to receive from the Lord the things that are best for us, in the best way, and at the best time; to understand our destiny, the purpose of our creation, the providential meaning of sorrow and trial, of temptation and affliction. Whatever our desire, if it be orderly and good, the Saviour administers to it, enabling us to realize it, and with it to receive the delight peculiar to itself. A believer's life may be a sweet and joyous life, filled with an ever-present peace and an ever-abounding hope. This joy is "*unspeakable*," it cannot be expressed; it is a thing to be felt, and not to be described in words. It is "*full of glory*," the glory of gratitude, the glory of praise and thanksgiving, and the glory

of the hope of the greater glory hereafter to be deveale

In the communication to us of this faith, this love, this joy, we already receive "*the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.*" It is a present salvation which is a foretaste of the fuller salvation in heaven. God's good gifts are to be received here and now, as well as in the life to come. He feeds our souls from day to day; He heals our wounds from day to day; He guides our feet from day to day; He renews our strength from day to day. Thus we may go on our way rejoicing, growing more child-like in our fuller trust, more angel-like in wider knowledge, more God-like in our tenderer love. And this hourly growth, in grace, in knowledge, in peace, in hope, in trust, is the ever-increasing salvation of our souls. How can we help loving Him who is willing and ever striving to bless us with all spiritual blessings here, that we may be prepared for the fulness of joy in His presence hereafter, and for the pleasures that are at His right hand for evermore.

PRAYER.

O Lord Jesus Christ, who in Thine own Person dost bring forth to view the eternal and infinite Jehovah,in whom we may see the Father and know Him, who art of a truth Emmanuel, God with us; help us to believe in Thee. We have not seen Thee

with our bodily eyes, but Thou dost reveal Thyself to our souls, and we behold Thy glory, full of grace and truth. Help us to see Thy beauty more clearly. Desire of all the nations, manifest Thyself unto us, that we may understand Thy wondrous mercy and the great love wherewith Thou hast loved us. Help us to love Thee for Thy great goodness towards us and towards all men. Needing knowledge, be Thou our teacher. Wandering sheep, be Thou our shepherd. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness, be Thou the feeder of our souls with the bread and water of life. Troubled and afflicted, be Thou our comforter and help. There is no want our souls can know but Thou hast promised to supply it. So often hast Thou blessed us hitherto that we cannot but believe in Thee and love Thee. Help us to believe with greater confidence, to love with purer devotion. Enable us to feel that Thou art near unto us, and that Thy presence is perfect peace. Give us of Thy joy, and help us so to act that Thy joy may abide in us. Deliver us from all the enemies of our peace, from all evil desires and thoughts, that we may rejoice in Thy great salvation. May Thy light shine upon us and lead us to Thy holy hill, to the blessedness of Thy presence here, and to the fulness of Thy grace hereafter. And all praise and thanksgiving will we evermore render unto Thee, our blessed and adorable Saviour and God. *Amen.*

THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE GIFT OF HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."—*John* iii. 16, 17.

GOD'S gift of His only-begotten Son is the crowning proof of His Divine love. After proving His love to man in so many ways, by creating him, by preserving him, by communicating to him such a measure of truth and grace as he was capable of receiving, last of all, God "*gave His only-begotten Son*' who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. It was not because God was angry with man, not because His wrath needed to be appeased, that this gift was bestowed, but because He "*so loved the world.*"

God created all things, because He is infinite love, and therefore desired the existence of beings whom He could make happy from Himself. He created man, because His infinite love desired the existence of intelligent beings who could understand and appreciate His love, and of free beings who could love Him in return. He made man capable of

loving, in order that man might love his God with all his heart and mind and strength. All the Lord's providence has been the out-growth of His infinite love. It has had this one object—*to lead man to the knowledge and the love of God.*

This merciful purpose has dictated all the revelations of Himself which God has made. It underlies every dispensation which He has established. Adapting His revelations to the continually declining spiritual state of man, the Lord has ever striven to show forth His love. When God made man, He designed him to become an inhabitant of heaven; and all His providence has ever been working steadily on to this gracious end. Every dispensation and new revelation of Himself is to be regarded as a further accommodation of Himself to man's condition; the institution of a new means whereby man might be reached, and rescued from falsity and sin. Nothing less than this could satisfy the ardency of the Divine love; and nothing less than this will enable us to understand the whole economy of God's providential dealings with mankind. The universal light, which "*lighteth every man that cometh into the world,*" had the same object as the brighter but less diffused rays of Divine light which shine from the written Word. They were both alike intended to serve as guides to direct men in the way of righteousness and peace.

But man continued to fall lower and lower into

spiritual degradation. Vain, corrupting, and impious myths obscured the feeble flickering of remembered tradition of a better time, and of a better way, dimmed the light which lighteth every man, and among heathen nations men gave themselves up to uncleanness and to work iniquity.

The Jews, the custodians of the oracles of God, had proved false to their mission. They had "*transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant*" (Isa. xxiv. 5). They had "*made the commandments of God of none effect by their traditions.*" Notwithstanding the miracles and the mercies, the entreaties and rebukes, the warnings and the judgments, by which the Divine love had sought to keep them faithful to their calling, they had altogether gone astray. A full end needed to be made of that dispensation. Its ordinances, its sacrifices, its priesthood, its tabernacle, and all its worship, pointed to Christ. They were shadows of the real and the true, serving a temporary purpose, accommodated to the then present states of mankind, but intended, "*when the fulness of the time was come,*" to be superseded by "*a new and better covenant.*" Yet it was Divine love which provided the symbol as well as the reality, the type as well as the greater thing which was typified. In preparing the way for His coming into the world, as well as in His actual coming, the infinite love of God was manifest. The work of preparing the way

by the institution of Judaism, lasted nearly 1500 years; and the Judaic dispensation was only one part of the all-embracing plan which was first indicated in the prophecy, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Love projected the plan; Love prepared the way, and Love realized its merciful purpose in the birth, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Hence we have the supreme proof of the boundless loving-kindness of God in the fact that "*God gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

The "*only-begotten Son*" is the humanity which was begotten of God, and born of the virgin Mary (Luke i. 35), "*the man Christ Jesus,*" in whom dwelleth "*all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*" Thus Jesus was the invisible God, made visible unto men by the human nature in which He was incarnate, truly "*God manifest in the flesh,*" the infinite Deity "*brought forth to view.*" Hence, when "*Philip saith unto Jesus, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath see the Father*" (John xiv. 8, 9). To believe in Jesus is to believe that He is thus the one living and true God, who in our nature encountered all our spiritual foes and redeemed us from their power, and is the Author of eternal salvation

unto all them that obey Him. Whoever thus believes in Jesus with a true and living faith—a faith which works by love, overcomes the world, and brings forth the fruits of righteousness—"*shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

"*Everlasting life*" means more than unending existence; for there is that in all men, the wicked as well as the good, which will never cease to be. It means the eternal life of the true manhood, the real angel-hood in man. True faith in Jesus Christ opens the soul so that the Spirit of God may fill it with holy affections, beautiful and exalted thoughts, sublime activities. It prepares man for heaven, for it fits the soul to feel heavenly love, to receive heavenly wisdom, to perform heavenly uses; and in thus living the life of heaven, to be filled with joy and happiness everlasting.

"*God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*" The world was spiritually dead when Jesus came. He came not to add to the calamity of this state of death, but to raise men out of it. Condemnation may follow upon His coming, but those who suffer it will have condemned themselves. The slave who is offered liberty and yet refuses to be free, condemns himself to slavery. The leper who is offered health and yet refuses to be healed, condemns himself to leprosy. The sinner who is offered deliverance from his evils and yet chooses darkness rather than

light, death rather than life, condemns himself to hell. What more could have been done for man than the Lord has done? In Jesus, the Infinite has stooped to our finiteness, the Eternal has condescended to our limitations, the Most High has come down to our low estate, and God has become a man. All this that He might show forth His love towards us, that He might save us from our sins, and exalt us to His kingdom and glory.

PRAYER.

O Thou Infinite and Eternal and Most High God, who hast condescended to our low estate and veiled Thy Deity in our human nature, so that we might see and know, and love and serve Thee; we gratefully acknowledge Thy boundless mercy and grace. We see Thee, who in Thyself art invisible, made manifest in Thine only-begotten Son, Christ our Lord. We desire to draw nigh unto Thee as revealed in all Thy fulness as our Redeemer and Saviour; to praise Thee for Thine unspeakable mercies, and to implore Thy saving grace.

We praise and magnify Thee for Thy great love, as shown in our creation and preservation and in Thy Providence over us; but more especially in the revelation of Thyself in Christ, in the blessings of a free salvation, and in the joys Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee. O deliver us from the power of our spiritual enemies, from our deep-

seated hereditary evils, and from the slavery of sin. Quicken us with that spiritual life from Thyself which is the beginning and foretaste of everlasting life. Give us that mighty and wonder-working faith in Thee, as God manifest in the flesh, which will open our souls to the life-giving influence of Thy Spirit. Fill us with holy affections and desires, with wise and true thoughts, and with strength to do Thy will. Help us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Thee, that we may become more and more the children of light, waiting and making ready for the call that shall welcome us to that inheritance in light, where we shall see Thee as Thou art and be blessed by Thee for ever.

Hear us, O God of our salvation, for Thy great Name and mercies' sake. *Amen.*

THE LESSONS OF GETHSEMANE.

"Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done."—*Luke* xxii. 42.

AMONG the many solemn lessons taught us by the bitter agony of our blessed Saviour, this is the most prominent—*What a dreadful thing sin must be when, in order to redeem mankind, the Lord of glory had to undergo so much!* The terribleness of a disease may be estimated by the terribleness of the remedies required to relieve or remove it. A man is bitten by a snake, and the spot is burnt out with red hot iron. Gangrene sets up its killing work in a limb, and with knife and saw the limb is removed. The surgery is frightful, but it is less frightful than the disease. Better the sharp agony, better even the maimed body, than death! In like manner the death which sin brought into the world must be viewed as the most terrible of things. The loving Lord so regarded it; and in order to destroy the power of that death, in order to redeem the victims of that death, in order to snatch them as brands from the burning, He "*bowed the heavens and came down.*" He assumed

our nature; clad Himself with our infirmities; rendered Himself susceptible to our temptations; and bore our human griefs and sorrows. In Him were "*made to meet the iniquities of us all.*" "*He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.*" Nothing less than this prolonged tragedy could remove the dread consequences of man's sin. The dreadfulness of the remedy shows the still more exceeding dreadfulness of the disease.

Another and most glorious lesson taught us by the agony of the Lord, is *the infinite loving-kindness of God.* Nothing can be conceived of in the mind which would more marvellously show forth God's love than the work of redemption. When we were enemies, alienated from God by wicked works, rebels delighting in our rebellion, in league with hell, and at covenant with death—then it was that God came to rescue us. He came, not in answer to human prayers, not to remove a bondage under which man groaned, and from which man yearned to be delivered; for even when He came to His own, His own received Him not. Only a very small remnant were "*waiting for the consolation of Israel.*" The mass of mankind were ignorant, and not desirous to be taught; were fallen, and had no wish to be raised; were lost, and felt no craving to be sought and saved. The most painful and terrible

symptom of their spiritual disease was this—they did not believe they were diseased. The most frightful proof of the depth of their degradation was this—they had ceased to regard their state as a degradation. Slaves as they were to sin, they yet loved the infernal licence which they had as if it were heavenly liberty. The bitterness of evil had grown sweet to them; the darkness of error they treasured as if it were the light of truth. We might conceive of an all-just and almighty Being sweeping the whole human race from the earth, and creating in their stead another human race, sinless and not so frail. Just as the Creator brought into existence on the earth myriads of creatures of which geology informs us, and when they had subserved the purposes of their being, blotted them out from the book of the living, and locked their skeletons in the stony sepulchres of the earth—so we might conceive of the extinction of the old race of man, and of its being superseded by another and better race. Such an extinction might have savoured of vengeance. God's love provided another and better plan. He came to His enemies that He might convert them into friends. He came to rebels that He might win back their allegiance. He came to men "*dead in trespasses and sins*" that He might quicken them with life from Himself. For such He underwent the agony of Gethsemane, and "*endured the cross, despising the shame.*" Infinite mercy,

infinite compassion, the wondrous tenderness of infinite love are here!

Another great lesson to be learned from Gethsemane is, that *suffering is the road to glory.* Of course it was the human nature of the Lord which was tempted, which prayed and wept, which suffered and died. God cannot be tempted; God cannot suffer and die. Jesus was perfect man as well as very God. Our bond of sympathy and communion with Him is His manhood. In respect of this manhood He is one of us; made like unto His brethren; touched with the feeling of our infirmities; tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; partaker of our flesh and blood, that so He might die, and "*through death destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.*" It was this human nature in which "*God was manifest in the flesh,*" that needed to be "*glorified,*" to be "*made perfect.*" And the process by which Jesus attained this glorification, this fulness of union with the Divine nature within Him, was one of suffering: "*For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings*" (Heb. ii. 10).

Hence the appearance of momentary shrinking from the cup of bitterness which He had to drink, of quailing from the fierce baptism of blood through which He had to pass, of bending under

the awful load which He had to bear, of being left lonely and desolate in the last agony of the cross, as though the Divine nature had forsaken the humanity that was just about to expire,—these appearances pertained to the human nature of Christ. They are pictures and patterns unto us. They reveal how we may be expected to shrink; and they teach us how, notwithstanding our natural quailing, we must go right on, denying ourselves, drinking the cup, enduring the baptism, bearing the cross, despising the shame. If the human nature of Jesus could realize perfection in no other way than by suffering, what other way is open unto us? If the gate of anguish needed to be passed through by Him in order to reach the throne of His triumph and abiding glory, we need to have fellowship in His sufferings in order to have fellowship in His victory. For we are "*heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together*" (Rom. viii. 17).

The secret of the power which the gospel story exerts on man is, that it presents to us the picture of a man—"*the man Christ Jesus*"—made in all things like unto His brethren. In possessing this human nature, Jesus Christ and all men meet on common ground. He is thus the Exemplar unto men, as well as the Redeemer of the world. Seen in this light, Gethsemane teaches us the practical

lesson of *patience under affliction.* We see the Divine pattern of a man, called to suffer, and learning to endure; tried to the uttermost, and never found wanting. His patience in suffering, His denial of His own will, His perfect submission to the will of God, furnish the sublime model for our imitation. God in Christ conquered, God in Christ strengthened Him; and so also in our sorrows and trials, our sufficiency is of God, our help cometh from on high. Our shrinking, yielding, quailing hearts may cry—"*Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me!*" but God in us will teach us to add the remainder of the prayer—"*nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done!*"

PRAYER.

O most merciful and loving Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the Infinite and the Invisible is made manifest, who art perfect man and very God, who didst bear our griefs and carry our sorrows, who wast wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, on whom was laid the chastisement of our peace, and by whose stripes we are healed,—we draw nigh unto Thee. Thou wast grieved more than any man, and wast afflicted more than the sons of men. Thou didst die to redeem us from the power of death, and didst rise again to quicken us with life from Thyself. Thou hast

ascended above all heavens, that Thou mightest fill all things. Thou art the Mediator of the New Covenant, the new way by which we have access to the Father. We address Thee, O God, in Thine own new name, as our Redeemer and Saviour, and implore Thy saving grace.

Give unto us to feel the hatefulness of sin. In the sorrows that sin has brought upon us, in the dreadful bitterness and grief which our sin entailed on Thee when Thou didst come to redeem us from the hand of the enemy, may we see how dreadful and abominable a thing it is.

Help us to recognise the infinitude of Thy mercy and loving-kindness. When we were enemies of God, alienated in our minds by wicked works, Thou didst come to reconcile us by Thy death. Inspire our hearts with new desires to come back into union with Thee. We would not frustrate the purposes of Thy love nor do despite to Thy Spirit of grace. Enable us to hate and shun every evil thing, to love Thee with our whole heart, to serve Thee with a single eye to Thy glory, to become one with Thee by the acceptance of Thy grace and by a faithful co-operation therewith.

We would walk in Thy steps, O Captain of our salvation. We would deny our own wills, and both in doing and suffering submit ourselves in all things to Thy will concerning us. Conform us more and more to Thine own image, so that being conjoined

with Thee on earth, we may be made meet to enter into Thy joy when it shall please Thee to call us home.

And all praise and honour and thanksgiving will we render unto Thee, our God and Saviour. *Amen.*

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."—*Galatians* ii. 20.

IF we would participate in the glory of the Saviour, we must be willing to take up our cross and follow Him. The price of the glory is fellowship in His sufferings: "*It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him*" (2 Tim. ii. 11, 12). Hence the sufferings of the Man of sorrows have a practical aspect, in which they need to be viewed by all who desire to enter into the joy of their Lord.

There was a *needs be* for the sufferings and death of Christ, not only in regard to us men and our salvation, but also in regard to Himself. While the grand purpose of the sacrifice of Himself was the redemption of all men and the salvation of all who will, it also had a reference peculiar to Himself: "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?*" The sufferings and death of Christ were needful, therefore, as preparatory to

the glory that was to follow. They were a part of the necessary plan, necessary in this respect as in all others—to qualify Him for the glory which afterwards became His.

It must be borne in mind that God took on Him man's nature, not in the glorified condition of the risen and ascended humanity, but in a condition in which, though "*without sin,*" it needed to be made meet to become the abiding tabernacle of Deity, and the everlasting medium of Divine influences to man. "*For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels*"—human nature in its perfected and heavenly state; "*but He took on Him the seed of Abraham*"—human nature like unto His brethren, accessible to their temptations, and subject to weakness, sorrow, suffering, and death: "*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*" (Heb. ii. 14). "*For we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (Heb. iv. 15). This assumption of a human nature inheriting our infirmities, bearing our griefs, carrying our sorrows, experiencing our temptations, establishes the closest relationship between Jesus Christ and every man. He has shown us of what human nature is capable, when completely open to the inflowing of the Divine

Spirit. He was very man as well as very God, and could thus be the connecting medium between God and man.

It is true that the union of the Godhead with the manhood in the person of Christ was initiated by the incarnation, when God took upon Him man's nature in the womb of the blessed virgin; so that, from the first, Christ was very God as well as very man. But it is also true that the fulness of this union was progressively attained, until by obedience unto death the human nature was glorified with all the glory of the Father. Thus we read that "*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man,*" that "*He learned obedience by the things that He suffered,*" and that He was made "*perfect through sufferings.*" This process of glorification, or making perfect, can only mean the increasing fulness of the union of the manhood with the Godhead in the person of Christ. The Godhead was all-glorious, all-perfect; but the manhood needed to be glorified, or made perfect, by the increasingly fuller descent into it of the Godhead, with which, consequently, the manhood became increasingly made *one*. Thus the union between the Godhead and the manhood, initiated by the incarnation, advanced continually to perfection during the Saviour's life on earth. His death was the culmination of His sufferings, the consummation of His obedience: He was "*obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" Being

thereby prepared and qualified for the reception of the infinite fulness of the Godhead, the human nature of Christ became the eternal form of God, in whom now "*dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*"

In this view of the Saviour's sufferings and death, He is a pattern unto us. As He was made "*perfect through sufferings,*" so we need to be "*crucified with Him,*" to "*know the fellowship of His sufferings, and to be made conformable to His death,*" in order to prepare us for "*the glory which shall be revealed in us.*" No cross, no crown; no conflict, no triumph; no suffering, no glory,—such is the declaration of the Scriptures: "*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together*" (Rom. viii. 16, 17).

Christ, however, is not merely our pattern in this work, the example we have to follow. If this were all, His experience would be of no benefit to us. Dead in trespasses and sins, altogether without strength in ourselves, Christ must be a *power in us* as well as *an example to us.* Only in this way can we realize any blessing from the spectacle of His sinless and perfect life. If the glorious gospel of the Son of God be not *the power of God unto salvation* to every one of them that believeth; the beauti-

ful life of Christ is no more than a wonderful history, revealing by contrast the imperfectness and deficiencies of our own lives; disheartening us, indeed, by the visions of an unattainable holiness, almost driving us to despair by the spectacle of an obedience altogether impossible to us. But Christ is a power in us, as the apostle says, "*Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*" As the Godhead dwelling within His manhood made His manhood all victorious and glorified it, so His Spirit dwelling in us may in like manner render us victorious, and afterwards glorify us together with Him.

"*The faith of the Son of God*" is a living faith, a life of "*faith which worketh by love*"—love to Him who first loved us, and so loved us as to give Himself for us. This living faith continually prompts us "*no longer to live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again.*" We cannot serve the Lord with a divided heart; the surrender of the soul to the Saviour must be complete. As He Himself says, "*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matt. vi. 24). Those who try to save their old life of selfishness and sin, must forfeit the eternal life offered by God in Christ. Not till we have learned to hate our old life of carnality, not till we are altogether willing to lose it for the Saviour's sake, can we possess the more glorious

life of joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. We must leave our all, all that was and is our own, in order that we may follow the Lord. The renunciation of evil must become total. All the old things must pass away, in order that all things may become new. We must be "*crucified with Christ;*" we must take up our cross and follow Him, or we cannot be His disciples.

How hopeless were the duty, if it were not for the promise that Christ shall live in us! To become the sons of God might well seem impossible, if our Divine Saviour had not covenanted to give unto all who believe in Him "*power to become the sons of God.*" Were Jesus not *man,* He could not draw out human sympathy, and encourage human imitation. Were Jesus not *God,* human sympathy would be unavailing, and human imitation would be impossible. Being *man,* He is our pattern; being *God,* He is our ever present helper. Being *man,* He lived for us; being *God,* He can live in us. Being both God and man, He is all-sufficient to us, and "*the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.*"

PRAYER.

Almighty and most merciful Lord God, the Creator and Redeemer of mankind, who didst take upon Thyself our nature and wast seen and known among men as Jesus Christ; we would magnify and praise Thy name.

Thou didst bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows; and for our sakes wast content to be betrayed and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross. Thus by obedience unto death didst Thou prepare the human nature which Thou hast assumed, to enter into Thine own ineffable glory, to ascend far above all heavens, that Thou mightest fill all things. Thy life on earth was a perfect and sinless life, though Thou didst suffer Thyself to be tempted on all points like as we are. Thus, as our great High-Priest, Thou canst be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and art able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Thee.

Dispose and enable us, O Lord, to take up our cross and follow Thee. We would be crucified with Thee, drink of Thy cup, and be baptized with Thy baptism. Help us to have fellowship with Thy sufferings and to be made conformable to Thy death, that so we may be prepared for the glory which shall afterwards be revealed in us. May Thy Spirit bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, heirs and joint-heirs with Thyself, so that suffering with Thee, we may be also glorified together.

Thou art our example, O Lord, and we would walk in Thy steps. Be in us the power of eternal life. Incline our hearts to hate our old life of selfishness and sin. Make us new creatures, by the

removal of all the old things wherein we were sold unto sin and in bondage under evil. Enable us to serve Thee with an undivided heart, to be Thine wholly and Thine only, to keep back nothing of the price of our old inheritance, to live with a single eye to Thy glory.

And while we receive Thine ever abounding grace, our continual praise shall be ascribed unto Thee the only wise God our Saviour. *Amen.*

THE GREAT RECONCILIATION.

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."—2 *Corinthians* v. 19.

IN reading the apostolic word, whatever may be the special difficulties of particular passages—difficulties which have been fruitful sources of division in the Christian Church—we see everywhere one prominent truth either expressed or implied, viz., that *by the death of Christ all mankind was brought into a new relation to God.*

This new relation to God, called by the apostle "reconciliation," is *an accomplished fact, predicated of mankind as a race.* Thus St. Paul says, "*We,*" that is, our previously alienated race, "*were* reconciled to God by the death of His Son;" and in the text, "God was in Christ, reconciling *the world* unto Himself." In both these passages there is a reference, not to believers only, but to all mankind.

Now it is certain that this "reconciliation," whatever may be its precise nature, implies no change in the mind of the immutable God. He who is "*the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,*" "*in whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning,*"

may and does operate variously according to the changing condition of mankind; but He is Himself Love, unchangeable Love, to all His creatures, and needed not to be reconciled to man. The change implied in the term "reconciliation," must therefore be *a change in the spiritual condition of mankind.* This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that wherever "reconciliation" is referred to, either in its general or in its individual aspect, it is spoken of as a reconciliation of man to God, and not of God to man. Thus, in the passages before quoted: "*We* were reconciled *to God* by the death of His Son;" "God was in Christ reconciling *the world unto Himself.*" And others to the same effect: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled *us to Himself* by Jesus Christ;" "We pray you in Christ's stead, be *ye reconciled to God.*"

What then is the nature of the reconciliation which was effected by the death of Christ?

When it is said that "God was in Christ reconciling *the world* unto Himself," the meaning is not that all men were by the death of Christ inwardly and consciously reconciled to the God from whom they had been alienated and estranged; but that the world—mankind as a whole—was *potentially* reconciled to God. The lost and alienated race of man was, by the death of Christ, redeemed from the powers of hell, and so brought into a new capacity of being saved, gifted with a new ability to realize

actual and individual reconciliation to God. Mankind was previously as the prey in the hand of the spoiler, as a captive in the power of the captor, as a bondman under the powers of evil. Mankind had so come under the power of sin as to have entailed on themselves all sin's disabilities. To avert from them the destruction which was imminent, and to make their salvation possible, the first thing needed was—deliverance from slavery, the taking captive the spiritual powers that held them in captivity, and the restoration of all mankind to such a condition of spiritual liberty, that whosoever would come might come and drink of the water of life freely. The strong man armed needed first to be driven out of the house of man's soul, before the man could open the door and admit the Saviour. This redemption of the world, this restoration of all men to a condition in which the salvation of each was made to rest upon his own deliberate and free choice, was the universal reconciliation effected by the death of Christ.

Hence the apostle distinguishes between reconciliation as a *past fact* in the history of the race, predicable of all men, and salvation as an individual benefit to be afterwards realized by those who believe: "For if when we were enemies we *were reconciled* to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled we *shall be saved* by His life" (Rom. v. 10). The true nature of this salvation by the living Saviour,

who redeemed us by His death, is clearly set forth in Colossians i. 21, 22: "You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, *to present you holy and unblameable and unreprovable in His sight.*" The *full* purpose of the universal reconciliation or redemption of man is plainly not realized in us, until Christ, who has redeemed men from the hand of the enemy, has also redeemed us from all iniquity, and purified us unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. The salvation of them that believe was made possible by the redemption of all. The bringing back into actual union with God of individual believers was made possible by the reconciliation of *the world.*

It must never be forgotten that at the time when the Lord appeared on earth "*the enemy had come in like a flood*"—the powers of hell had risen to such a height that moral freedom was well-nigh lost. Life from God coming to man through false and evil media was perverted. The hereditary propensities of mankind, entailed through so many sinful generations, were becoming increasingly corrupt and increasingly powerful. To rescue man, God needed to bow the heavens and come down. To encounter the enemies of man, He needed to hide Himself, to veil His divinity in man's nature, to be Immanuel, God with us, so that the Everlasting Father might

also become the Prince of peace. The condition of the world at the time of the Lord's coming was the penalty of man's wickedness, the necessary consequence of the former and the then actual evils of mankind. Their "*trespasses*" had brought them into this state of bondage unto sin, from which only "*the Son*" could set them free. In so far as "*God in Christ*" remitted to mankind the penalty of their sins, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," there was, on God's part, *an act of universal and free forgiveness*, which the apostle describes as "not imputing their trespasses unto them," that is, not leaving mankind to the consequences of their sins. Jesus Christ conquered and subjugated man's enemies. He cleared away the spheres of falsity and evil in which mankind was immersed, and which interposed between them and God. He removed the disabilities which sin had brought upon mankind. He set all men free by the universal reconciliation, so that having been redeemed by His death, they might be saved by His life.

But how did "*the death*" of Christ effect this great reconciliation, this change in the spiritual condition of mankind?

Our Lord's conflict with the powers of darkness was by means of their temptations. By allowing them to assault Him in His own person, He triumphed over them "in Himself;" and in every such triumph He reduced them to subjection, and

redeemed us from their power. His whole life was a continual conflict with the infernal powers. This conflict, ever ending in victory, terminated in the endurance of the last temptation, by His obedience unto death: "*that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil*" (Heb. ii. 14). Hence St. John instructs us: "*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil*" (1 John iii. 8). The life of the Saviour in the world was a continued course of putting His enemies under His feet; and in like manner His reign in the soul of the believer is a gradual subjection of every enemy and of all evil. Because of these victories wrought out in His seasons of temptation, He was "*without sin,*" though He "*was in all points tempted like as we are*" (Heb. iv. 15). By the same victories, which redeemed us from the hand of the enemy, His humanity was glorified, or made "*perfect through sufferings;*" the man Christ Jesus was thus rendered capable of being exalted "*far above all heavens,*" made the abiding tabernacle of Deity, the recipient of "*all the fulness of the Godhead,*" so that as "*God in Christ*" He might thenceforth be our all-sufficient Saviour and the object of our faith and love. But in order that Jesus might fully conquer him that had the power of death, He must die; to make His obedience perfect, He must die; to redeem man from death and hell, He must die; to reconcile the

world unto Himself, He must die; to enter into His glory, He must die. The last enemy in the conflict must be encountered, before He could say of His warfare, "*It is finished.*"

The reconciliation effected by the death of Christ was so far the removal of all involuntary hindrances to man's return to God, that all may now come boldly to the throne of grace. But the full blessings which it was designed to introduce can be enjoyed only by those who realize in themselves the personal and actual reconciliation which "*God in Christ*" made possible for all. The work of Christ is being completed in them; for they are not only the redeemed of God, but also the purified, the sanctified, the saved. The work is a twofold work, and Jesus is called by the double title of the *Redeemer* and the *Saviour* of mankind. What He did potentially for all, He is willing to do actually for each; so that "*we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, may serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life*" (Luke i. 74, 75).

PRAYER.

Ever gracious and long-suffering God, who in Christ Jesus our Lord didst manifest Thyself in the flesh to redeem all men and to reconcile the world unto Thyself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; we would come boldly to Thy throne of grace,

that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. We bless and praise Thy holy name for all the wondrous mercies vouchsafed unto us, Thy unworthy children. Even when we were sold under sin, and in bondage unto evil, Thou didst not despise nor forsake Thy creatures. When no arm but Thine almighty arm could deliver, it was stretched forth to redeem us. When the enemy had come in like a flood, Thou didst lift up Thy standard against them, and as our Redeemer Thou didst bow the heavens and come down. We were altogether gone astray, and Thou didst come to seek us. We were lost, and Thou didst come to save. Thy mercies are from of old, and shall endure unto all generations.

Grant unto us that while meditating on what Thou hast done for all the world, we may desire to realize Thy priceless mercies in our own souls. Reconcile us to Thyself. Bring back into agreement with Thee all our affections and thoughts, all our deeds and words. Thou hast banished the strong man armed from the house of our souls; incline our hearts to hear Thy voice, to open the door and to let Thee in, so that Thou mayest sup with us and we with Thee. May the great salvation which Thou hast made possible for all, be actually realized by us, so that we may become one with Thee, to abide in Thee for evermore. Even as Thou hast overcome our enemies for us, give us grace that we

also may overcome and sit down with Thee on Thy throne. Even as Thou hast died once and can die no more, enable us to die indeed unto sin and to live unto Thee as those that are alive from the dead. Help us to fight the good fight of faith, and to endure unto the end; that when we have finished our course we may receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. *Amen.*

THE ASCENSION.

"Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."—*Psalm* lxviii. 18.

IN meditating on the Divine work and life of our adorable Saviour, our attention is first and chiefly arrested by "Jesus Christ and Him *crucified.*" Yet as we continue to study that marvellous work and that wondrous life, we are led to think as much of Jesus Christ and Him *glorified.* The mind turns from the contemplation of Gethsemane and Calvary, and follows the Lord and His disciples to Bethany, where "*He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.*" The agony and bloody sweat, the cross and passion, fade from the immediate thought as we gaze on the beauty and listen to the voices of the two men in white apparel, saying: "*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven*" (Acts i. 11). The mourning and the lamentation that went up at the foot of the cross is exchanged for the "*great joy*"

and the "*praising and blessing God*" of the witnesses of the ascension.

"*Thou hast ascended on high.*" We must not allow the letter of Scripture to mislead us in the comprehension of the sublime truth of the Saviour's ascension. We are not to think of heaven as being situated somewhere in space beyond the natural firmament of stars and suns. The ascension was not merely a local translation of the Lord's human nature, a mere bodily removal in space. Such a materialistic conception of heaven and the ascension is entertained only by those who are ignorant or incapable of the true spiritual idea. The altitude of the heavens is a spiritual altitude not measurable by miles. Ascension in the spiritual sense is *exaltation in state,* and not merely elevation in space. So the ascension of Jesus to God was the final exaltation of His human nature, by which it became the abiding tabernacle of Deity, the everlasting medium in which God dwells and through which He now operates on man. This filling out of the human nature of Christ with infinite love and wisdom and power, is what is meant by His having "*sat down on the right hand of God.*" The birth of Christ was the incarnation of God: the life of Christ on earth was the qualifying of that human nature to become the eternal temple wherein God should infinitely dwell: the death of Christ was the putting off of everything that could limit His re-

ception of God, or impede the Divine operation through Him: the resurrection of Christ was the return of His human spirit, now made "*perfect through sufferings,*" to the body that was crucified: and the ascension of Christ was the complete unition in Him of the Divine with the human, the Godhead with the manhood, so that now "*in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*" How great is the glory to which He is exalted as the reward of His humiliation and sufferings, we learn from the apostle: "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*" (Phil. ii. 5–11.)

"*Thou hast led captivity captive.*" The life of Christ on earth was a warfare against evil and the powers thereof, described in prophetic language as "*the mighty,*" "*the spoiler,*" "*the enemy,*" "*the terrible.*" The redemption which He achieved was

a redemption by conquest. The wrath from which He rescued us was the rage of the spoiler, the wrath of the devil. He delivered man from the hand of his spiritual enemies, from them that hated him. "*Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in Himself*" (Col. ii. 15). All Christians have to "*wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world*" (Eph. vi. 12). In this they do but follow in the steps of their Redeemer, and in His strength may overcome even as He overcame.

"*Thou hast received gifts for men.*" The glorified humanity of Jesus Christ, the everlasting tabernacle of Deity, is now the centre of healing and sanctifying influences continually poured down from on high, on the Church and the world. By the assumption and glorification of the human nature, the Lord not only redeemed us from infernal powers; not only reconciled, or *brought back into union* in Himself, the Divine and the human, God and man; not only left for man the perfect example of a sinless life of righteousness; but He also prepared for Himself a new and everlasting medium, in and through whom He could reach all men in every condition of their spiritual degradation, by influx adapted to their states. The glorified humanity, "*the man Christ Jesus,*" received in Himself the infinite fulness of the Divine gifts, so that He might thenceforward

impart them to mankind. Thus the gift of the Holy Ghost—*the operation of God in Christ, the Divine proceeding through the glorified humanity*—was the result of the ascension, as it is written, "*The Holy Ghost was not yet; because that Jesus was not yet glorified*" (John vii. 39). Christ bade His apostles tarry at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high; and on the day of Pentecost, ten days after the ascension, He fulfilled His promise and inaugurated a new era in the spiritual history of mankind.

These Divine gifts, received by Jesus Christ for man, are happily not confined in their bestowal to the good alone. If this were so, who could hope to obtain them? The wondrous mercy of God is shown in the fact that the blessings treasured up for us in the risen and glorified Mediator, were received for all men, "*yea, for the rebellious also.*" Christ died to redeem His enemies; He ever lives to save those who sometime were alienated, but who now turn unto Him that they may live.

The end of the incarnation, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, was "*that the Lord God might dwell among men.*" God dwells with the meek and lowly, with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit, by the presence of His Spirit in their souls, seeking to conform them to His own image, and imparting to them love and light, and life and joy.

There is a tendency in many minds to dwell too exclusively on the *death* of Christ; but they run the risk of thereby losing sight of the fact that His death was the preparation for, and the condition of, His life-giving presence with His Church. Bearing this in mind, the apostle says, "*It is Christ that died,*" and then immediately adds, "*yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God.*" The *living* Christ is the foundation of all Christian hopes, the theme of apostolic joy. "*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life*" (Rom. v. 10). All that Christ has done and suffered would have been of no benefit to man without the mission of the Holy Ghost. Hence He said, "*It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you*" (John xvi. 7). The gift of the Holy Spirit, the bestowal of the life-giving influences of the new age, could only have been possible by His going away; and His going away was His ascension unto God, the completed glorification of His human nature. Hence if Jesus be not risen, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins. If Jesus be not glorified, our hope of glory is vain, for we can only be glorified together with Him. We are heirs only to what He has received, joint-heirs with Him in His sufferings and glory.

PRAYER.

All-glorious and ever-adorable Lord Jesus Christ, who art God manifest in the flesh, the only wise God our Saviour, who hast ascended on high, who hast led captivity captive, who hast received gifts for men; we would approach Thee with reverence and godly fear. Thou art He that liveth and was dead, who art alive for evermore, and hast the keys of hell and of death. We bless and praise Thy Name for all Thy wondrous works in our creation, redemption, and salvation. We would learn every lesson that is taught us by Thy life on earth, by Thy agony and bloody sweat, by the anguish of Thy cross, by the greatness of Thy resurrection, by the glory of Thine ascension unto the right hand of power. We trust Thee, the ever-living, to save us by Thy life, even as Thou hast redeemed us by Thy death.

Fulfil in us the gracious purposes of Thy love. Deliver us from all captivity to evil. Be in us our emancipator from the bondage and slavery of sin. Rescue us from the hands of our enemies and from the wrath of all that hate us. We have been rebellious, alienated from Thee by wicked works; yet Thou didst come to reconcile us to God. May Thine infinite loving-kindness overcome our obstinacy in unrighteousness, that we may truly turn unto Thee and live.

Pour out Thy gifts upon us O Lord. Give unto

us more and more abundantly of Thy Holy Spirit. May it be within us the light of life, revealing to us Thy will concerning us, and ever inclining us to walk in Thy holy ways. Inspire our hearts with perfect trust in Thee, with full resignation and entire submission to Thy holy will. We beseech Thee leave us not comfortless, but come Thou into us and abide with us, that Thy joy may be in us, and that our joy may be full.

Grant unto us that we may know Thee and the power of Thy resurrection; being lifted up above the cares and pleasures of our lower life; feeling conscious of Thy presence, and confident in Thy love; and ever striving to let our light so shine before men, that we may glorify Thy holy Name. *Amen.*

NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS.

"These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."—*Titus* iii. 8.

"*FAITH without works is dead.*" Such a faith is useless both to ourselves and others. It is useless to ourselves, because it does not make us tender of heart, kind, and merciful. It is useless to others, because no one is the better for the faith which we profess. The only way in which life is exhibited is by action. Good works are therefore the evidence of a living faith.

But good works are more, even than this. They are a *means of grace;* that is, a means whereby we may grow more and more meet for our heavenly inheritance. *For as by sinning a man becomes worse, so by obedience he becomes better.* The doing of evil increases and establishes the love of evil in the soul of the sinner. It also confirms him in the habit of doing evil, and by destroying his conscience leads to the unrestrained commission of more gross and terrible iniquity. So, on the other hand, the doing of good, from the love of good, increases and establishes the love of goodness in the soul of the believer.

It also confirms him in the habit of doing good, and makes the doing of good continually more easy and more delightful. The habit of doing evil is the education of the soul for hell: the habit of doing good is the education of the soul for heaven.

Outward acts are the outbirths of inward principles. The corrupt fruit of evil is borne by the corrupt tree: the bitter water proceeds from a bitter fountain. But by a law of Divine order, outward acts strengthen the inward principles from which they spring. These principles, thus strengthened, stimulate to increased action, and thus, by an alternating increase of cause and effect, a man grows, both inwardly and outwardly, the worse for the evil that he does. So also good works, springing from faith and love, react upon the soul, and make a man, both inwardly and outwardly, the better for the doing of them. Love and faith, not ultimated in good works, will languish and die. *Active righteousness is therefore absolutely necessary to spiritual life and growth.*

The merciful purpose of the Lord concerning us all, is to form within us a truly Christian character; that is, to make us altogether like Christ. But *a man's true character consists of what he loves, of what he thinks, and of what he does.* Not one of these three can be omitted. The character of our Saviour combines all His tenderness of love, all His perfectness of wisdom, all His deeds of mercy. The ulti-

mate end of all that the Lord does, in us and for us, is to make us good, in heart and mind and life. So that loving affections and desires, and the knowledge of the laws and conditions of heavenly life, are given to us on purpose that we may do good. They altogether fail to realize the Divine will concerning them who attain not to this characteristic of the Saviour—"*He went about doing good.*"

Beside this, *obedience, from right principles, opens the soul to the inflowing of the Holy Spirit,* who cleanses and sanctifies the soul which freely submits to the Divine operation. Be it ever remembered, that only the Lord can cleanse and purify the soul. Even the fact that what we do reacts upon the soul, and strengthens the principle from which the action springs, is a Divine appointment. It is one of the laws of spirit, according to which the Creator operates in the soul of man. Just as He causes the earth to be fruitful according to certain natural laws—which are indeed no more than the modes in which God is operative in nature—so in the purification of man's soul, the Lord operates according to certain spiritual laws. One of these laws or modes of Divine operation is this:—Obedience, from right principles, opens the soul to the inflowing of the Holy Spirit, who purifies the soul from evils, and implants holy desires and affections in their stead. Continued obedience, therefore, is the only means of developing a truly Christian character. It is

man's part in the great work; the condition, under and during which the Lord does His own glorious and Divine work—the cleansing and sanctifying of the soul itself. Well then may the apostle say, "*These things are good and profitable unto men.*" They help to make the soul heavenly, even while the man is living in the world. They prepare him to receive more fully of the Lord's gracious gifts. They increase his fitness for the heavenly inheritance which the infinite mercy of God has provided for those who are conformed to His own image and likeness.

There is yet another sense in which obedience is good and profitable unto men. It brings with it a present recompense in this life. The ever-bounteous Lord does not intend that all the joy of His creatures should be postponed until they reach heaven. So truly good is He, that even here He permits us to have a foretaste of heavenly blessedness and delight. He has ordained that we should compass true happiness only in the way of duty; not merely that duty should be the condition of happiness to come, but that in duty itself, the spontaneous expression of holy and benevolent affections towards God and man, we should find our satisfying and enduring reward. Not only do wisdom's ways lead to pleasantness, but they are pleasantness; not only do her paths lead to peace, but they are peace. Love is richest in joy when we are seeking to mani-

fest it in deeds of love. Happiness, whether here or in heaven, is found in the effort to make others happy. The law of delight is the law of use—of doing good to others. By bringing us into the good and orderly state of tenderness, mercy, charity, the Lord brings us into blessedness. Hence the doing of good works is immediately, as well as prospectively, profitable unto men.

It is true, however, that in the beginning of the regenerate life, obedience springs from a sense of duty rather than from inclination. We have to restrain ourselves from doing wrong, and to compel ourselves to do right. The reason of this is, *the obedience of faith precedes the obedience of love.* But doing good from a sense of duty is the first step towards doing good from the love of goodness. The habit of obeying the Lord, from the desire to be and to do good, opens the soul to a Divine influx which will gradually change the character of our motives. The obedience which at first seemed hard, will, when the love of goodness becomes our ruling principle of action, be found a joyous service. We enter into harmony with the Lord, and find that "*His commandments are not grievous,*" and that "*in keeping of them there is great reward.*"

One great practical lesson we may learn from this, viz., that when faith seems weak, and love seems cold, the best way to revive these drooping graces is activity in duty. Prayer is needful, but is not

sufficient of itself. Pious meditation is useful, but will not of itself prove efficacious. Reading the Bible is a good medicine, but will not alone restore the soul. With pious thoughts in our minds, with the spirit of prayer in our hearts, we must go forth, compelling ourselves to the duty which we see is to be done: and the love of doing the duty will grow, the love of goodness will be developed, joy will come to us; and we shall find by experience that, as a means of grace in such seasons of need, "*these things are good and profitable unto men.*"

PRAYER.

Most holy and ever-blessed Lord Jesus, who hast given unto us the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, that we may learn and do Thy will; and who hast promised to give power unto all that believe in Thee to become the sons of God: we humbly beseech Thee to quicken our hearts with love to Thee and to all men. Help us so to live as not to have a name to live and yet be dead. Grant unto us a living faith which worketh by love, and delighteth in doing good. By the light of Thy truth guide our feet in the ways of wisdom and the paths of peace.

Thou hast made the doing of good to be profitable unto men; enable us to obtain the many spiritual blessings connected therewith. Increase in us the desire to become like Thee. Confirm us in the habit

of well-doing. Quicken our consciences to discern evil, and incline our hearts to put it far away from us. May every good affection which Thou dost implant within us, continually bring forth the good fruit of loving, merciful, and charitable deeds. Bestow upon us a present recompense in the joy of serving Thee, which is the sweet assurance of the joy that shall be, when we meet Thee in Thy kingdom, where Thy joy shall be in us, and our joy shall be full. Teach us the blessedness of ministering to others; and when we are cold and indifferent, show us a duty that we can do, and help us to find light and life and joy therein. Thus fulfil in us Thy gracious will while we remain on earth; that when it shall please Thee to call us hence, we may be fitted for the higher uses of Thy kingdom in heaven. *Amen.*

CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTABLE OBEDIENCE.

"Trust in the Lord, and do good."—*Psalm* xxxvii. 3.

FOR a work to be called "good," it is not enough that it is externally conformable to the letter of the Divine law. That which appears good in the sight of men may be abomination in the sight of God: "*For the Lord seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart*" (1 Sam. xvi. 7). The moral character of everything we do depends on the motive from which we act. Such as is the motive of the act, such is the moral quality of the act. When the motive is good, the act is good. When the heart is right in the sight of God, every deed which springs from the pure affections of that heart is a "good work" in the sight of God.

The Saviour has taught us what motives are good —love to God and love to the neighbour. Whatever is done from a merely selfish motive, to gratify selfishness in any of its myriad forms, is not good, but evil. However good in appearance, it is hateful to the Lord and hurtful to ourselves. It turns us away

from the Lord. It so far shuts up our souls against the influx of life from the Lord. It confirms selfishness in the soul, and inclines us to be more fully of the earth, earthly. The principle of the carnal mind which is enmity against God is *selfishness*, a constant turning to self—thinking of self, and pandering to self. The purpose of the Saviour is to rescue us from this state. From being lovers of self and of the world, He wills that we should become lovers of God and of the neighbour. Instead of our actions springing from those selfish and carnal dispositions, He wills that they should spring from these heavenly affections, and so become truly good.

The Lord alone has life in and from Himself. All other beings live by influx of life from the Lord, and that from moment to moment. But observe: the Lord does not desire that men should be mere *machines*, even though the working of such machines might be faultless. While He is the continuous and unfailing source of life to man, yet in order that man might have the power of free determination, He has so ordered His gift that it seems to all men as if they live of and from themselves. It seems to us as if our life were really our own, self-derived and self-directed. Only in this way could the Giver of life so far separate Himself from the recipients as to leave them conscious of individual existence and free to employ their life according to their will. The connection between

human life and its Divine source is unbroken; but while it is true that "*in Him we live, and move, and have our being,*" life from God is so imparted that it seems to us as if it were independently our own.

This is the case with natural life, and it is likewise the case with spiritual life. While in very truth "*it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do,*" yet it seems to us that both the will and the power to do good are of ourselves. The Lord thereby secures to man a spiritual individuality in the good that he does; He thus preserves in man spiritual liberty at the same time that He imparts to man spiritual goodness. The new nature which prompts the Christian to do good seems to him to be as truly his own as did his former merely natural life. The promptings of the new heart and the right spirit, seem to him as fully the spontaneous impulses of his own will as did the prior promptings of his unregenerate mind. Thus faith in the Lord as the Source of spiritual life does not interfere with man's liberty. The angels who realize with fullest conviction that they live only by influx of life from the Lord, are conscious of the highest freedom.

While continually leading him to love and to do good, the Lord thus preserves to man his power of free determination in regard to spiritual things. Hence man should constantly strive to cherish within himself the love of God and of the neighbour, and to carry out these holy affections into practice; nevertheless,

with the ever-present conviction that all the will and the power to do good are from the Lord alone. While trusting in the Lord, we should strive to do good; and while ever striving to do good, we should continually trust in the Lord.

Without such a faith in the Lord's ever-present and all-sufficient grace, the works we do are not "good works." One reason is, because we do not then give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name. We spiritually "rob God" when we do not acknowledge the Divine proprietorship in all that is good. We are to do good *as* from ourselves, and yet not *from* ourselves. The distinction is important: for, in the first case, we ascribe our sufficiency to God; and in the second case, we ascribe it to ourselves. The spiritual consequences to the soul are immensely diverse: for, in one case, the soul is opened to the influx of spiritual life from the Lord; and, in the other case, it is closed. It is only when we are "*strong in faith, giving glory to God*" as the Source of all goodness, that our works are "*counted to us for righteousness.*" The loving Lord does not require of us this acknowledgment of Him for His own sake, but because we thereby become receptive from Him of spiritual life, peace, and joy. It is not because He is jealous of His own honour, but because He is desirous of our welfare.

It is said that "*without faith it is impossible to please God,*" and that "*whatsoever is not of faith is*

sin." These momentous truths cannot be too much pondered. Faith gives acceptableness to works in two ways.

(1.) *By the motives which it sets before us*—teaching us to shun evil, because it is sin against the Lord; and to do good, because it is pleasing in His sight.

In thus continually looking to the Lord, and doing everything as under His all-seeing eye, our souls are open to the influx of spiritual life from Him; the Spirit itself witnesseth with our spirit that we are the children of God; and we have a joy in obedience which is at once a token of its acceptance and its exceeding great reward.

(2.) *By correcting our natural tendency to self-righteousness*—teaching us that all our sufficiency is of the Lord, who worketh in us both to will and to do.

The Lord is the sole Author and Giver of all good in man, and this good is given so continuously that we are as dependent upon Him as the branches upon the vine. It does indeed seem to us that we do good of our ownselves; but faith corrects this appearance, and teaches us that all the merit and the praise for human goodness is due to the Lord alone. If in the spirit of self-righteousness we "*give not God the glory,*" our works are not of faith, and are counted to us as sins; we arrest the influx of spiritual life from the Lord; and "*being lifted*

up with pride, we fall into the condemnation of the devil."

The more we increase in knowledge and in goodness, the more we shall realize that all our sufficiency is of the Lord, from whom alone all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works proceed. We learn our own worthlessness, our own nothingness, the more largely we receive the Lord's gifts. The increase of those gifts will make us wiser and better: but humility will grow with the greatness. The highest angels acknowledge that God in them is *all*, and that they are as nothing before Him.

PRAYER.

O Lord Jesus Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, we approach Thee as the great self-subsistent Jehovah, the Source of life, in whom we live and move and have our being, and the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Thou dost desire that we should become truly blessed by receiving Thy truth into our minds and Thy love into our hearts. Thou dost desire to enter into and reign in our souls, that so the joys of Thy kingdom may be ours. We bless and praise Thee for all Thy mercies towards us.

We have learned by many experiences that of ourselves we can do no good thing. Our carnal minds are at enmity with Thee, and would prompt us alone to selfishness and sin. Of ourselves we should do

evil, and that continually. We bless Thee that Thou hast not left us to ourselves. By Thy love Thou dost urge us to desire that which is good; and by Thy wisdom Thou dost seek to guide our feet into the ways of righteousness and peace. Thou dost reveal Thyself as our continual Helper and our all-sufficient strength.

Enable us to set Thee always before us, shunning evil, because it is sin against Thee; and doing good, because it is pleasing in Thy sight. Deliver us from the delusion of self-righteousness, and incline us to ascribe all merit and praise to Thy holy Name. Give unto us to discern more clearly Thy Spirit working within us, that we may joy in the assurance that we are indeed Thy children. Increase our faith in Thee, deepen our love to Thee, and work in us both to will and to do that which is acceptable to Thee. Thus may our whole lives show forth Thy praise, that we may be prepared to love and serve Thee in Thy heavenly kingdom for ever. *Amen.*

THE LAW OF GROWTH AND HAPPINESS.

"As every one hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."—1 *Peter* iv. 10.

THERE is one great and comprehensive truth that underlies all the practical teaching of the New Testament, viz. that *we are not our own.* So opposed to all selfishness is the spirit of Christianity, that it denies to us the right of claiming as our own anything that we have or are. We have no right to do as we like with our lives, or our talents, or our worldly possessions. They are given to us in order that they may be of use, and that in the orderly use of them we may further our own development and well-being, and find our true happiness.

We can use or waste our talents according to our own good pleasure; yet in regard to them we are as stewards who are accountable to the Giver. We can defeat the purpose for which He gave them, but we cannot escape the reckoning. The purpose for which our talents are intrusted to us is, *that we may be made media of blessing to others;* and the good Lord has so ordered that *our endeavours to be of use to*

others react in benefit to ourselves. The Lord is a true economist in all His works. He so orders everything that it shall subserve many purposes. The soul that does good to others grows in goodness. He that is a medium of blessing to others is himself blessed thereby. Hence selfishness is folly as well as sin; for while it prevents us doing good to others, in the same degree it prevents us doing good to ourselves.

In regard to spiritual gifts, the more we communicate, the more we shall receive. *The law of increase is the law of use.* The Saviour teaches that even in worldly matters this great law to some extent must obtain: "*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again*" (Luke vi. 38). This Divine law does unquestionably rule in regard to spiritual things, both on earth and in heaven. We must minister because we have received; and that we may receive more abundantly, we must minister. In ministering to others we enter into the true order of our life. Our life comes from God who is the universal *Giver;* it must therefore impel us to *give,* it must prompt us to words of help and deeds of use. If we are not conscious of this impulse, it is because our life, although received from God, has become perverted in our reception of it. The more it re-

tains of the character of its Divine original, the more must it impel us to act in a God-like way, and *give.* The Saviour's greatness and oneness with God arose from this, among many other things, that He came "*not to be ministered unto but to minister.*" He was the greatest of all, because He was the servant of all. In seeking to resemble Him, we enter into harmony with the Divine purpose, which is, *that all may be blessed, and that they may realize their own blessedness in seeking to bless each other.*

We must, however, communicate to others for *their* sakes, and not merely to serve our own ends. While it is true that they who give are enriched, that they who teach learn, that they who help grow strong, that they who bless are blessed: yet if in giving we only think of our prospective gain, if in blessing we only think of the richer blessing we shall receive, the apparently unselfish act is really a deed of the most refined and intense selfishness. The selfish motive vitiates the efficacy of the seemingly unselfish act. By the universal law of reaction, that very act only tends to confirm our own selfishness. The love of use, that is, the desire to do good to others, and not the love of self, or the desire to benefit ourselves, should be the leading motive of all we do. If tried by such a test, how many who are engaged in worldly uses would be found wanting! Raging desires to gain riches, ease, indulgence, honour, authority, burn up the hearts of too many.

The last thought that would come to many, or the last that would be entertained and cherished by them, is that *the master purpose of a true man's life is to be useful to others!* There is no duty so mean that would not be ennobled by this motive. There is no function so dignified that would not receive from this motive fresh dignity and lustre. All that God does is for His creatures, and not for Himself. They most fully enter into the joy of their Lord who most fully resemble Him in this Divine attribute of disinterested beneficence.

Love, wisdom, and use are the elements of angelic life. In heaven, where the laws of Divine order are perfectly obeyed, love and wisdom received continually from the Lord are ultimated, or find their embodiment, in use. We may know but little of what are the employments of angels, but of this we may be sure—that for those of His creatures whom God fills with love He provides others that may be loved; and for those whom He endows with superior wisdom, He provides others that my be taught. Wisdom is infinite only in God. In all created intelligences wisdom can exist only in a relative degree, as more or less. That the Lord should make the wiser angels media of instruction to the less wise, does not lower our conceptions of the felicity and perfectness of heaven. Surely it may be thought that new-coming spirits fresh from earth must need and may profit from the loving instructions of their

elder brethren of the skies. The felicity of heaven, it may well be believed, does not consist merely in the reception of "*the manifold grace of God,*" by each angel for himself, but also in "*ministering the same one to another, as good stewards*" thereof.

One thing our own experience can teach us. Whenever we are actively engaged in the uses of charity, from the love of doing good, we are the most richly and consciously blessed. The reason of this is that we are thereby brought into consociation with those angels of the Lord's kingdom who are in the love of similar uses; and those angels are made to us media of blessing from the Lord, by imparting to us of their affections and delights. Thus, by the law of spiritual affinity, which draws together those who are animated by similar affections, the angels associate with us, though unseen, and fit us for the higher uses of the eternal world. In this way they are "*ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation*" (Heb. i. 14).

One precious saying of the Lord Jesus pertinent to the subject now before us, though not expressly recorded in the Gospels, has been handed down to us by St. Paul: "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" The delight of the natural man is to *get;* the delight of the spiritual man is to *give.* The truly beneficent man is the happiest man. He derives a purer and a deeper joy from the luxury

of giving to make others happy, than in himself receiving from others.

There is no good thing we have received from the Lord but to which the injunction of the text applies. It enunciates an universal duty. No gift is bestowed for ourselves alone, "*that we may consume it upon our lusts.*" Others are to be made the better, or the wiser, or the happier, because of every gift we have received. Indeed, receiving involves the duty of imparting unto others, so that all may be blessed. The strong must help the weak, the wise must teach the ignorant, the well-off must assist the needy, those that have the light of truth must not hide it under a bushel, those that have received the grace of God must minister unto others as stewards, and those that are blessed with the love of God shed abroad in their hearts must love the brethren and abound in deeds of love. So shall they grow up into the image and fulfil the purpose of the all-loving Father, and so shall they be prepared to join the general assembly of the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.

PRAYER.

O most gracious and loving Lord, Thine infinite goodness is shown in all Thy works, and in all Thy dealings with the children of men. Thou art the Author and Giver of every good gift. Our lives are

not our own. Our talents are not our own. Our worldly possessions are only lent to us for a little while. We are stewards under Thee in respect of all we have and are. Thy manifold grace demands our manifold gratitude. Incline our hearts to bless Thee for all Thy mercies.

Help us to remember that we shall have to render an account of our stewardship. May we so employ the talents Thou hast entrusted to us, that we may become media under Thy providence for blessing others. By rightly using Thy blessings may we become fitted to receive yet more abundantly. Enable us to enter into the true order of life, into harmony with Thy Divine purposes and operation, and so to enter into Thy joy.

Guard us from all self-seeking in the good which Thou dost enable us to do. Fill our hearts with the love of use. Teach us the sweet lesson of humility, the greatness of service, when springing from unfeigned love. May Thy example be the great pattern of our lives; and even as Thou camest not to be ministered unto but to minister, so teach each of us in following Thee to delight in being the servant of all. May we realize the blessedness of consociation with Thine angels, and be prepared in our turn to become the sent of the Lord. Thus learning to know the greater joy of giving than of receiving, our grateful and adoring hearts will ever praise Thy glorious name. *Amen.*

SINS OF BELIEVERS.

"Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit."—*Psalm* li. 11, 12.

THE Psalms are marvellously adapted to all the varying phases of Christian experience. They contain a description of every state. They furnish prayers and praises suited to every change in our spiritual condition. They are profitable for encouragement, for guidance, for warning, for rebuke. As out of a Divine storehouse, the soul may draw whatever of daily bread it needs to meet its daily wants. God has been very gracious unto His people in having inspired the minstrel king of Israel to pour forth his soul in these psalms. He has proved His loving-kindness in having providentially preserved them for our comfort and instruction.

The Psalms show—what other portions of the Divine Word declare, and what frequent experience testifies—that a believer may fall into sin. The strength of his hereditary evils, called into activity by the incitement of some external circumstance, may prove too much for him. The pressure of the

temptation may seem to him more than he can bear; and he may fail to realize that with the temptation which God permits, He ever gives strength to overcome, if in striving against sin we look to Him for help. In a moment of passion, of infirmity, of carelessness, of unbelief, the enemy may gain an advantage over him, and he may fall into sin. What then is the penalty of his unfaithfulness, and how does it affect his confidence towards God?

The inevitable effect of all sin will come upon him. It will bring a cloud over his soul, which will hide the light of God's countenance from him. It will destroy his peace, interrupt the consciousness of God's presence and favour, and deprive him of the joy of His salvation. Having grieved and resisted the Spirit, he may sink into indifference for a while; but at length, stung with remorse, he will be tempted to despair. The enemy of souls will suggest to him that it is of no use for him to strive against sin, mock him because of his weakness, taunt him with his fall, and tempt him to abandon the service of God as a hopeless task. Having betrayed him into sin, the enemy will seek to keep him from repenting, and will try to induce him to give himself up to sin without restraint. All this is the devil's work in man. It is not God who brings the believer's soul into such a state of misery and despair, but God's enemy and ours. The Lord

permits it as a means of leading the soul by a bitter experience into deeper contrition, into a more humble watchfulness, into a stronger conviction of the necessity of continually depending upon Him, into a more susceptible conscientiousness, so that being forgiven we may "*go and sin no more.*"

The means of attaining to a realized forgiveness are close at hand. They are penitence and prayer, watchfulness, and a more resolute striving against all evil as sin against the Lord. It is wrong to think that feeding our remorse, that inflicting upon ourselves mental punishment, that prolonging our misery of soul, that a constant tearing open of the wounds of our conscience and making them bleed afresh, will help us to regain the joy of salvation and the consciousness of God's presence and favour. These are devices of the enemy who would discourage and dismay us, rather than encourage us to hope, and stimulate us to trust in God.

The forgiveness of the sin of a believer is not an act of Divine mercy external to himself, but it is *the removal of the spiritual penalties of the sin.* Peace returns to the soul; conscience ceases to torment with a sense of guilt; remembrance of the sin no longer brings back the dark hour and the dread of God, but makes the soul more humble, more prayerful, and more watchful against sin. The Lord restores the light of His countenance and the joy of His salvation, renews the sense of reconcilia-

tion with Him, and opens the soul afresh to the influx of His grace. He has then recovered it out of the snare of the devil, and has once more begun to uphold it with His free Spirit. He has thus worked out the Divine purpose of His permission, viz., to inspire the soul with a deeper abhorrence of sin, a more interior aversion to it, and a more resolute determination to shun it for the time to come.

It would however be a fatal abuse of the Divine mercy and forbearance for a man to suppose that, instead of conquering his besetting sin, he may go on sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting all his life. It must never be forgotten that evil grows upon us if we do not grow in goodness. Down the terrible steps which lead to hell the soul must descend which does not "*resist the devil.*" These steps are unmistakable—yielding occasionally to sin, then sinning habitually, and then taking delight in sin. It is true that we can put no limits to the Divine forgiveness; the loving Lord never refuses His mercy and grace to those who truly repent. This however can be said—in so far as a man acquires the habit of sinning, and grows into finding his delight in sin, in so far he closes his soul against God, sears his conscience, and makes repentance more difficult and less probable.

The Christian who has fallen into sin may have hope in the mercy of the Lord; and in the example

of those who have fallen, or in the experience of their own weakness, all may see the need of watchfulness, so as to discern and to shun the first approaches of evil. We are soldiers of the Cross, besieged by spiritual foes, and must not allow the wary and subtle enemy to carry even our outworks Little sins so speedily become great ones! We may see the necessity of prayer, so that in the hour of temptation we may be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We may see the imperativeness of a patient continuance in well-doing, a faithful and diligent discharge of every duty, a finding for ourselves some work of mercy or of use. Idleness is the devil's opportunity. We may also see the necessity of instant repentance when we have been betrayed into sin. Delaying to repent weakens the desire to repent. Temporising with sin makes sin less hated and less grievous.

Unwillingness to confess our sins and to implore pardon, very often arises from distrust of the mercy of the Lord. This distrust is one of the consequences of sin. We are naturally averse to approach the Lord against whom we have sinned. Our fears invest Him with an aspect of terror, and we shrink from Him as from an object of dread. While it is well to meditate upon our guilt and its aggravations, so that we may confess our sins and humble ourselves before the Lord, this mistrust of God is one of "*the wiles of the devil.*" It seems to

us that the Lord is angry, because of the cloud which sin has brought over us, and which obscures our perception of the sunshine of His love. God needs not to be appeased; but we, in our suspicion and dread, need to be reconciled to Him. He is the unchangeable God, whose compassions fail not, and He would not have taught us the prayer in the text if He had not purposed to enable us to realize its fulfilment.

PRAYER

O Lord God of our salvation, who art merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; we desire now with humble and penitent hearts to draw nigh to Thy throne of grace. We confess unto Thee our omissions of duty and the many sins we have committed in thought, word, and deed, through our own most grievous fault. Have mercy upon us according to Thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out our transgressions. Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity, and cleanse us from our sin. Create in us a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within us. Cast us not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from us. Restore unto us the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold us with Thy free Spirit.

Preserve us by Thy grace from those sins which so easily beset us, restrain us from those evils and follies into which we are so prone to fall. Enable us to watch and guard against our peculiar temptations, to redeem the time, and to pursue with steady progress the narrow way that leadeth unto life. Whenever we are tempted to go back from Thee, give us that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation. By the promises of Thy Holy Word arm us against the cruel suggestions of the enemy which would tempt us to despair of Thy mercy. By the experience of what an evil and a bitter thing it is to forsake Thee, make us more humble, more prayerful, more watchful against sin, more faithful in Thy service. Guard and guide us through all our mortal course, and when our warfare is over, receive us to Thy rest above, where they who have been faithful unto death shall receive the crown of eternal life.

And all merit and praise will we ever ascribe unto Thy Holy Name, in which we ask all things for Thy tender mercies' sake. *Amen.*

CONFESSION OF SIN.

"I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."—*Psalm* xxxii. 5.

PROMINENT among the conditions of forgiveness is the duty of confession. Hence St. John says, "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John i. 9). Even among the Israelites, before any trespass-offering could be accepted, the person bringing the sacrifice must "*confess that he hath sinned*" (Lev. v. 5). The purpose of the Lord is not only to remit the punishment of sin, but also to purge and purify the soul of the sinner, so that he who sinned shall sin no more, and so that he who found delight in sin shall turn to hate it with all his heart. It is mercy —not vengeance—in God which has made sorrow and suffering the inevitable consequence of evil. The state of sinfulness is a state of spiritual disorder. Until this disorderly state is removed, the reception of peace and joy, of light and love from God is impossible. It must actually be removed from our souls before it can be spiritually well with

us; just as a state of disorder must be actually removed from the body before we can be physically sound and whole.

In removing the disorder of sin, man's voluntary co-operation with the Spirit of God is necessary. The process of regenerating the soul, of bringing it into a state of order and harmony with the Lord, cannot be effected without man's consent. It is the process whereby man is led by the Lord into the hatred of all that is false and evil, and into the love of all that is true and good. Therefore it is necessary that a man should be able to discern sin in himself, to perceive that he is a sinner. Therefore it is necessary that he should be able to see what a dreadful, hateful, and lamentable thing sin really is. Only by such means can man be led to hate evil and to choose good, to seek deliverance from evil and to desire to grow in goodness, to come to the Lord, the good Physician, to be cleansed of his spiritual diseases and to be restored to spiritual health. He must grow weary of his old life of selfishness and sin before he will consent to lose it, for the sake of the higher life which the Lord is willing and ever ready to bestow.

Because of these things, *the confession of sins* is enjoined. We must discern sin in ourselves before we can really confess it. We must desire to forsake sin before our confession is anything more than mere lip-service. When confession is genuine,

there is beneath it a deep longing of the soul to be delivered from the power of evil, and to attain to a consciousness of the Divine favour. Mere lip-service in confession is of no avail. It cannot avail, because *only they who feel their own sinfulnesss, and inwardly desire as well as outwardly strive to shun evil as sin against the Lord, can ever attain to a realized forgiveness.* The souls of such lip-servers are still closed, they cannot receive pardon and healing strength from the Lord. They are among those of whom the Lord said—"*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me*" (Matt. xv. 8). True confession is *heartfelt.* It implies—

(1.) *Conviction of sin.* The soul does not merely repeat the words of a set form. It knows that it has sinned; it discerns wherein it has sinned and come short of the glory of God; it knows that its sins have brought a dark cloud between it and the Lord. It is just as conscious of having sinned, as it is conscious that it is alive.

(2.) *Humility because of sin.* The soul feels ashamed of itself. It is pained by the knowledge of its own weakness. Its self-love, its self-pride, its trust in its own strength, are rudely shattered to pieces. It has nothing to urge in extenuation of guilt. It can only cry, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*"

(3.) *Penitence for sin.* The soul desires to escape from its state of sin, as well as from the state of wretchedness which sin has brought upon it. It approaches God's mercy-seat, mourning as well as humble, beseeching pardoning grace, and owning that of itself it is only evil. It hates the sin into which it has fallen. It comes to God, like a little child to his father, earnestly craving to obtain strength so as to be able to go and sin no more.

All these inward feelings of conviction, humility, and penitence, take form in thought, and find expression and relief in words. *They are thereby drawn out as well as intensified and confirmed.* Love, that never outwardly manifests itself, is but a cold and feeble affection. A thought that is never expressed, is in danger of fading away from the mind. Hence the necessity of *oral confession* of our sins to God. It perfects the perception of our state, it intensifies the feeling of our wants, it develops the receptivity of the soul.

This oral confession is to be made to God alone. "*I acknowledge my sin unto Thee . . . I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord.*" Our sins are transgressions against Him. He alone is able to pardon. Unto Him only is our confession due. When, however, we have sinned against our neighbour, it is our duty to confess our fault to the person against whom we have sinned. This is what is meant by the apostle: "*Confess your faults one to*

another" (Jas. v. 16). The sin we have committed against our brother should be confessed to our brother. Sometimes this is a greater trial of our humility than confessing our sins to God. Even in other cases, though not a duty, it may be a relief to the soul to disclose its burden and its grief to a loving and sympathising friend. It may be, however, that the sin is so grievous that it is better not to confess it to man at all. Then the soul has to bear a terrible addition to its burden, in the secret consciousness that it is so deeply guilty that it dares not show its guilt to man. What depths of humility must that soul know when it presents itself before God!

Confession should not be merely vague and general, but also special. In ordinary states, general confession is useful and necessary. For public worship, in which many join, confession of sin is necessarily in general terms, so as to suit the states of all. Yet even in public worship, each one for himself should give definiteness to the general form of confession—that is, the words should remind each, not only of the general fact of his sinfulness, but of those particular sins of which he knows himself to be guilty. In our private prayers, in the confessions which we make when alone with God, our special transgressions and shortcomings require special confession. We need to be *convicted* of our own sins, to be *humbled* because of our

own sins, and to *repent* of the sins we have actually committed, or desired to commit.

Confession to God, in the true spirit of repentance, opens the whole soul to Him. It opens the heart which in the act of confession mourns because of its sins. It opens the mind in which such mourning penitence takes form in thought. It opens the operative powers of the soul to receive help and strength from the Giver of all good. This opening of the soul to God brings relief. The experience of multitudes of Christians would prove this. We may meditate long upon our weakness and folly in sinning, we may dwell upon the aggravations of our guilt, we may feed our self-reproach until we both despise and hate ourselves. But the trouble often remains, the weight on the conscience is often not removed until the soul is brought to acknowledge its iniquity and to confess its transgressions unto the Lord. We cannot remove the dark cloud. Do what we will, writhe as we may, the consciousness of forgiveness can come only from the Lord. So long as the psalmist "*kept silence,*" he found no relief. Only in confessing his sin unto the Lord was his repentance perfected, and his soul opened to receive pardon and peace.

Confession is not needed to inform the Lord of our transgressions, or to induce Him to forgive us. The change is wrought, not in God but in ourselves. *Our confessions re-act upon our own souls: they open*

our hearts to receive mercy from the Lord. The cloud and the misery are in us. God would unceasingly shine upon us and fill us with joy. The hindrances are in ourselves, and our conviction of sin, our humility, and our penitence, bring us into a spiritual state in which we are made supple to the moulding of the Divine hand, submissive to the impulses of the Divine will, receptive of the blessings of the Divine love.

PRAYER.

O most gracious and merciful Lord Jesus Christ, Thou dost desire to make all Thy creatures pure and holy, and like unto Thyself. By Thy Spirit Thou art continually striving within us, to lead us out of darkness into light, out of spiritual death into the reception of life from Thee. We know that if we confess our sins, Thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. O grant unto us a full and abiding confidence in Thy loving-kindness and willingness to forgive.

We acknowledge our sins unto Thee; we would not hide our iniquities from Thee or from ourselves. We know that of ourselves we are altogether evil; we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, and have transgressed against Thy holy laws. More especially would we lament and confess before Thee our most besetting sin, the evil tempers to which we are most prone, the weak-

ness into which we are most easily betrayed. Deepen our conviction of sin. Help us to see how hateful a thing it is, how it hides Thy face from us, and hinders the reception of Thy grace. Pardon, O Lord, what Thou hast seen amiss in us in time past. Enable us to hate and shun all that is displeasing in Thy sight, so that no obstacle may exist to our communion and conjunction with Thee. Make us contrite of heart, mourning our sins and follies, and looking to Thee for help, that we may walk more worthy of our high calling. Help us to endure temptation, as knowing that thus only can we be purified in heart and mind and life, and grow to love and think and do that which is pleasing and acceptable to Thee. So by Thy strength becoming partakers of Thy victory, and overcoming as Thou didst overcome, we shall sit down with Thee on Thy throne for ever and ever. *Amen.*

GOD IN CHRIST.

"In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."—*Colossians* ii. 9.

IN 1 John v. 7, we read: "*There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*" This is a concise summary of the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity; and well would it have been for the Church of Christ if the simplicity and comprehensiveness of this summary had commended it to Christians as a sufficient confession of faith in this cardinal truth of their religion.

As God is One and indivisible, so the whole of this Divine Trinity, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost—*God in His infinite fulness of Love, Wisdom, and Power*—dwells bodily in Christ. Thus we read, "*The Father* that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works" (John xiv. 10). "*The Word* was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John i. 14). "God giveth not *the Spirit* by measure unto Him" (John iii. 34).

Hence it follows that Jesus Christ our Lord is the One living and true God, manifest in human form: "For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so

God and man is one Christ." To approach God, therefore, we must approach Him *through the only-begotten Son* (Luke i. 35), the human medium in whom He dwells and in whom He is made manifest. This is the true doctrine of mediation, as expressed by the text: "*There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*" (1 Tim. ii. 5). There is now no God *out of Christ*, and he who does not come to God by Him, does not approach God at all; as Christ Himself says, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father but by me*" (John xiv. 6). We truly approach to God only when we approach God's holiest temple—the glorified humanity of Christ.

We have a strong confirmation of this truth in the fact that Christ is represented in Scripture as the medium of all Divine influences to men, which must needs be if the human nature is now the eternal embodiment of the Divine. Thus we read: "Of *His fulness* have all we received" (John i. 16); "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, *that will I do*, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John xiv. 13). "When the Comforter is come, whom *I will send unto you* from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me" (John xv. 26). "Unto every one of us is given grace, *according to the measure of the gift of Christ*" (Eph. iv. 7). Hence, too, He is called "*The Bread of life*" (John vi. 35); "*The Light*

of the world" (John viii. 15); "The head over all things to the Church, which is His body, *the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*" (Eph. i. 22, 23).

For the same reason the Church is exhorted to look to the Lord Jesus as its constant helper, instructor, supporter, comforter, and guide. In promising to His people the gift of the Holy Spirit, He promised to them His own presence: "*I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you*" (John xiv. 18). "*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*" (Matt. xviii. 20). "*Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*" (Matt. xxviii. 20).

Whenever, therefore, we would think of God, we must think of Him in the glorified Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This will give definiteness to our ideas of God. Many think of God as of an infinitely diffused substance without form. Thus the thought of God is dissipated, like the sight of the eye when looking upon the boundless universe. All this vagueness is removed when we think of God as of a Divine Man, infinite in love, wisdom, and power, and present by His life-giving effluence in all creatures and in all things. The deep desire of every earnest soul is to know God: "*Show us the Father and it sufficeth us.*" And to the soul so yearning to know God, the Saviour answers, as He answered Philip—"*Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me,*

Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 8, 9). The attempt to think of God as He is in the infinite abysses of His own nature must ever be futile. The mind becomes confused in the effort to soar so far above the necessary limitations of human thought. But in Jesus, "*God manifest in the flesh,*" we have a revelation of God exactly suited to our wants. The vagueness of belief in God, which prior to the incarnation was inevitable, is now abolished in Christ Jesus our Lord. "*God in Christ*" is so brought down to our spiritual state, that He can be a subject of rational thought and an object of rational love. The incarnation was such an accommodation of God to our condition as to bring God within the limitations of human thought and affection. It was the most wonderful of all Divine accommodations to man's state. To know Christ is to know God, and to love Christ is to love God—not God afar off in the infinitude of His Divine nature, incomprehensible by human thought: not God as an abstract idea, taking shape in the necessary anthropomorphism of our own minds, but God incarnate—"*Emmanuel, God with us.*"

To angels in heaven, as well as to men on earth, God, who in Himself is invisible, is manifested in Christ. They think of God and see God as a Divine Man, who created them in His own image and likeness, and who Himself descended into the natural and material plane of His creation, and was manifest

in the flesh. Though far exalted above man in the degree of their capacity of seeing and knowing God, yet the angels are no more than finite. For God to be seen and known to them, the Infinite must descend and clothe Himself with the semblance of finiteness; the Invisible must put on visibility; the Ineffable must accommodate Himself to their apprehensions. To them, Jesus Christ, visible in His glorified Humanity, is the fullest revelation of God; He is their Lord as well as ours, the object of their worship and service; and He is the medium to them as well as to us of light and life and joy. Hence we read: "*Let all the angels of God worship Him*" (Heb. i. 6). "*Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come*" (Eph. i. 21). "*God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*" (Phil. ii. 9–11). "*Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him*" (1 Pet. iii. 22). So, too, we read that Jesus "*ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things*" (Eph. iv. 10), angels in heaven as well as men below. They, with us, are made perfect

in Christ; and they, as well as we, may say, "*Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.*"

PRAYER.

Ever adorable and thrice holy Lord God Almighty, who in the fulness of Thine infinite Love, Wisdom, and Power, dwellest bodily in Thy glorified Humanity, we would reverently bow down and worship Thee. We cannot ascend to the contemplation of Thee as Thou art in Thine absolute Perfection, in Thine infinite Majesty; but we rejoice that Thou hast revealed Thyself to us in man's nature, and that in the face of Jesus we may behold Thy glory.

We approach Thee in Thine only-begotten Son, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We ask Thee in Thine own highest Name of Jesus Christ for all the blessings that we need—that we may be comforted by Thy presence, illumined by Thy light, strengthened by Thy grace, fed by the living bread which cometh down from heaven, refreshed by the water of life. Enable us so profitably to contemplate Thy holy nature, that our hearts and understandings may be united in Thy fear, while our words and deeds bear testimony that we hallow and reverence Thy Holy Name in sincerity and truth. May we thus adorn Thy doctrine, O God our Saviour, in all things, and be found in Thy sight full of charity, mercy, and good fruits.

Help us to realize a blessed communion with Thy

saints above; to be sharers in their joys; to feel Thy presence with us, even as they feel; and to delight as they do in the knowledge and love of Thee. For Thou, Lord Jesus, whose Name alone is Jehovah, art not only the most high over all the earth, but Thy glory is above the heavens. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name; evermore praising Thee and saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory: Glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High!" *Amen.*

PRAYER.

"The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all them that call upon Him in truth."—*Psalm* cxlv. 18.

TRUE prayer, in the sense of petition or supplication, is threefold. It consists in—a genuine desire of the soul for a certain object; the consciousness of this desire as a thought of the mind; and the expression of this desire and of this thought in the form of words.

Our prayers are real only so far as they truly express the earnest desire of the heart; and only so far as they are real can they possibly be of use. Of the hypocritical Pharisees, whose prayers were mere lip-service, the Lord complains, "*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me*" (Matt. xv. 8). Sincerity is the very soul of prayer, without which it is a dead service, dishonouring to the Lord and hurtful to ourselves.

Prayer is not needed to inform the omniscient Lord of our wants, "*for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him*" (Matt. vi. 8); neither can it avail to change the purpose of the All-wise, nor to make the All-loving more gracious

and willing to bless than He was before. But though prayer does not effect any change in the Lord, yet it does effect a most important change in man. In true prayer the face of man's spirit is turned towards the Lord, and the mind and heart of the petitioner are opened to receive from the Lord the blessings adapted to his state.

Besides making us receptive of grace which the Lord is ever willing to bestow, there is in prayer itself a reflex benefit. We are the better for our prayers, not only *through* them as a means of receiving blessings from the Lord, but *by* them on account of their own influence upon ourselves. This benefit is twofold—Firstly: because true prayer re-acts upon ourselves in confirming and increasing those spiritual graces which are exercised in prayer and find expression in its words. Secondly: because in true prayer we hold communion with God, and the effect of such communion is to conform us to the Divine Image. It is an invariable principle operating with the certainty of cause and effect, that man by worshipping becomes assimilated to the object of his worship. Hence in loving and habitual communion with the Lord in His true character, "*we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

Prayerful feelings without the habit of praying are

not enough. The true spirit of prayer prompts to acts of prayer, and this spirit will be checked and will be in danger of passing away unless it finds expression and relief in words. We are told to "*pray without ceasing,*" that is, to maintain a state of prayerfulness; and the only sure way of attaining to this as an abiding state, is by cultivating the habit of praying. This indeed is one of the reflex benefits of prayer—that when the utterance of prayer is prompted by the spirit of prayer, it has a direct tendency to increase its own cause.

Prayer will be ineffectual without practice—unless accompanied by our own endeavours to realize the blessings for which we pray. By prayer we seek from the Lord grace to overcome falsity and evil, and to grow in knowledge and in goodness. It is a *means* of grace, and must not be mistaken for the end. Of what use is it to pray for patience, if we do not try to curb our impatience? to pray for purity, if we continue to indulge in uncleanness? to pray for charity, if we foster unkindness and neglect to do charitable deeds? *Prayer for Christian graces will be ineffectual, unless at the same time we resist all evil as sin against the Lord.* While a man from this motive strives against evil, prayer is a mighty and most efficacious means of attaining Divine help. It induces such spiritual states upon the soul that the Lord can effectually work within it, to enable it to will and to do that which is pleas-

ing in His sight. It brings the soul into states of humility, of distrust of self, of constant looking to the Lord for help and guidance, which are the very states into which the Divine influx can enter and in which it can abide, so as most effectually to help the soul to attain holiness, joy, and peace.

Prayer should be chiefly for *spiritual* blessings. In regard to our worldly circumstances we ought to seek to cultivate patience and perfect resignation to the Lord's will. There must ever be a danger of fostering merely selfish desires in praying for worldly goods and worldly prosperity. In the model prayer which the Lord has taught us, the only petition which in the literal sense refers to worldly goods is, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" If the souls of men were altogether right in the sight of God, we may assuredly believe it would be well with their bodies too: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matt. vi. 33).

Prayer must not be for personal blessings only; but we must pray for others as well as for ourselves. In what way or by what means our intercessions are made available we may not see; but of this we may be sure—that as the Lord has enjoined upon us this duty, so there must be efficacy in our prayers for others; not to conciliate the Divine favour, but to bring them in some way, according to the laws of Divine order, within the sphere of influences that

may do them good. And with prayer for others must be joined willingness and effort on our part to do them good, and thus, as far as in us lies, to give effect to our intercessions in their behalf.

Lastly, all prayer should be addressed to "*God in Christ,*" to the Divine Father in the Person of His only-begotten Son (Luke i. 35). Hence our Lord promised to His disciples, "*Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son*" (John xiv. 13). The meaning of this is, not that we should pray to the Father to bless us for Christ's sake, but that we should pray to *the Father in the Son,* addressing our prayers directly to Jesus Christ our Lord who is Himself "*the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father,*" in a glorified human form. Thus St. Paul writes to the Corinthians as those "*that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord*" (1 Cor. i. 2). Jesus Christ is Jehovah manifested, the very Form of the Divine Essence, the very Image of the Invisible. To come to Jesus Christ, then, is to come to God! and to ask the Father in the Name of Jesus Christ, means to address our prayers *immediately* to Jesus Christ, and thus *mediately* to the Father who dwells in and is one with Him.

PRAYER.

O Mighty God and Everlasting Father, who in Thy Divine Humanity art named Jesus Christ; we praise Thee for all Thy mercies, but especially for the revelation of Thyself in the gospel as Immanuel, God with us. Thou art the only Source and bountiful Giver of all good; in Thee dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and of Thy fulness we may all receive.

Let a sense of Thy Divine Majesty keep us from the great sin of praying to Thee with our lips only, while our hearts are far from Thee. Give to us those inmost desires which are the very life of prayer, so that deeply conscious of our need, and humbly trusting in Thy willingness and power, we may pray to Thee in sincerity and truth. Thou knowest what things we have need of before we ask, and Thou art ever more ready to give than we are to receive. Thou needest not that we should instruct Thy wisdom, or conciliate Thy favour. But for our sakes Thou dost require us to pray to Thee—to preserve and increase in us a constant sense of our dependence upon Thee, and to open our souls to receive out of Thy fulness the blessings adapted to our state. Give us grace so to ask that we may receive, so to seek that we may find, so to knock that it may be opened to us.

Enable us ever to bear in mind that our own

endeavours must be conjoined with prayer—that those who pray for heavenly light must seek it in Thy holy Word, that those who pray to be redeemed from all iniquity must shun all evil as sin against Thee, that those who pray for holiness must be unwearied in well-doing and diligent in all the means of grace, that those who pray for others must strive to do them good.

Thus coming habitually to Thy throne of grace, and ever striving to do Thy will, may we realize by happy experience that Thou art nigh unto all them that call upon Thee, to all them that call upon Thee in truth. And to Thee, O blessed Lord Jesus, be the glory and the praise for ever and ever. *Amen.*

GENUINE AND APPARENT TRUTHS.

"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are no consumed."—*Malachi* iii. 6.

CAREFUL readers of the Bible cannot fail to have observed in it seemingly conflicting statements in regard to the moral character of God. So also its statements in regard to matters of natural science appear to confirm the popular errors entertained on such subjects at the time in which the Scriptures were written. These apparent discrepancies and errors have furnished arguments to the infidel, and occasioned mental trouble and perplexity to many sincere inquirers who have been unable to reconcile their existence with the claims of the Bible as the revelation of Divine truth.

There are two classes of statements in the letter of the Word of God—those in which the truth is openly and absolutely expressed; and those which convey the truth, not as it is absolutely, but as it appears to the minds of men in a low moral and intellectual state. We may conveniently style the former *genuine* truths, and the latter *apparent* truths. The necessity and advantage of this distinction will be seen in applying it to the descriptions in the

Word of the moral character of God. Thus we read—"*I am the Lord, I change not*" (Mal. iii. 6), and yet "*the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger*" (Josh. vii. 26); "*He is not a man that He should repent*" (1 Sam. xv. 29), and yet "*it repented the Lord that He had made man*" (Gen. vi. 6); "*God is love*" (1 John iv. 8), and yet "*the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul hateth*" (Ps. xi. 5); "*Fury is not in me*" (Isa. xxvii. 4), and yet "*The Lord revengeth and is furious*" (Nah. i. 2).

It is evident that these two classes of statements cannot be in the same manner true. We are compelled to distinguish between them, to accept the first class as descriptions of the moral character of the Deity as it actually is, and to accept the second class as descriptions accommodated to the lowest natural and sensuous perceptions of mankind. That is, the first class of statements expresses the *genuine* truth, and the second class the *apparent* truth.

The purpose of the existence in the Bible of *apparent* truths in relation to God is clear; viz., to reach minds in a low moral or intellectual condition, who can think of God in no other way. Although the understanding may be elevated above the will, so that we can see the excellence we have not realized in ourselves, yet all men, more or less, picture to themselves a God in their own image, so that in this sense it is true: "*With the merciful Thou*

wilt show Thyself merciful; with an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright; with the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the froward Thou wilt show Thyself froward" (Ps. xviii. 25, 26). Only so far as the Divine characteristics are revealed *in* us, can they be spiritually discerned. While others may have a speculative knowledge of the Divine perfections, only the loving can really know God in His Divine love, only the wise can really know God in His Divine wisdom, only the holy can really know God in His Divine holiness. As men grow up into the Divine image and likeness, so in proportion their perceptions of the Divine Nature deepen and become exalted. To the wicked, God appears what He really is not—terrible, jealous, full of wrath: while to the good He appears what He really is—altogether loving, gracious, full of compassion; the Divine Father, whose love is deeper and more tender than that of a woman for her firstborn. Being born again, they see the kingdom of God; being pure in heart, they see God; being lifted into heavenly light, they recognise their Father in heaven. By accommodating the verbal revelation of Himself to the states and capacities of men, God has provided a means by which all may be reached, and by which all may be enabled to believe. The lower view will give place to the higher as men become more and more receptive of the higher, through faithfulness to the light they have.

In the book of nature, as well as in the book of revelation, we are compelled to distinguish between genuine and apparent truths; and in the sun, which is a symbol of the Lord, we have a very close analogy strikingly illustrative of the subject now before us. The sun, which is gloriously effulgent in an unclouded sky, appears red and lowering when obscured by fog; but there is no change in the sun itself. It is thus with the unchangeable God under the different aspects in which He appears to man. Seen through the clear spiritual atmosphere of love and truth, God is love, and immutable love; seen through the fog and mist of evil, God appears to be angry, wrathful, at enmity with man. When man changes in his spiritual condition, and from his changed condition thinks of the Lord, it seems to him as though the Lord had changed. To conclude from appearances that the Lord changes is as great a fallacy as to conclude from appearances that the sun moves round the earth. The absolute truth is that the sun in respect of the earth is stationary; the sun only appears to move, and the real change is in the earth itself which seems to be so immovable. The sun changes not; the Lord changes not. The sun seems to change—waxing and waning in brightness and in heat; now coming nearer to us, then retiring farther from us; now effulgent in the noontide, then altogether gone in the obscurity of night. God, in like manner, seems to change—now shedding forth light

and love, then frowning and angry; now very near to our souls, then far removed from us; now causing the soul's noontide of love and glory, then leaving the soul to mourn His absence during its dark cold night. The change of the earth's place and position is the real cause of the apparent changes of the sun; and variation in man's spiritual condition is the real cause of changes which seem to take place in God. God is unchangeable; the changes take place in us. He has hung His unchanging image in the natural firmament to be an unalterable witness to His universal operation, to be the very analogue of the light and heat, the truth and goodness which He continually pours out on all mankind. The appearance of change in the sun does no injury to him who believes that the appearance is a reality. The time may come when the reality will be known and the appearance will be explained. So the apparent truths of the Bible in relation to God, if the highest of which the mind is capable, do no injury to him who believes them. They only become hurtful when he who has once believed them is thereby confirmed in his rejection of the higher truths.

The Bible thus contains two classes of literal statements concerning God; each true, relatively to the perceptions of different classes of men—one class of statements expressing apparent truths in terms accommodated to the lowest and most sensuous perceptions of mankind; the other class expressing

genuine truths in terms adapted to those who are receptive of higher views. But in making this distinction between apparent and genuine truths, it must be borne in mind that even our highest and clearest views of the Divine Nature are, after all, only approximations to the truth. We cannot see God in His unveiled glory, in the infinitude of His Divine perfections; we can see Him only under an aspect limited to our perceptions, and in light adapted to our state. Though the difference between man's highest and lowest conceptions of God may be immense, yet both alike fall infinitely short of the reality of God. Still, the higher our view, the more worthy it is of God, and the more helpful to our own souls. The truth concerning God, in proportion to its dignity and accuracy, opens the mind to the operation of God. God works in the angels more effectually than in us, for one reason, because their perception of God is higher and clearer than ours. He has so accommodated His revelation of Himself as to bring it within the range of every mind, so that the childlike may have a childlike faith, the ignorant a limited and simple faith, the wise a larger and more enlightened faith in God. Thus all can believe, and according to their faith can receive the Divine operation into their souls, transforming them from the image of the earthly into the image of the heavenly, until they "*all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a per-*

fect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13).

PRAYER.

Infinite and Eternal Lord God Almighty, who dwellest in the light which no man can approach unto, and of whose ineffable Majesty we can form no conception, save as it hath pleased Thee to accommodate the revelation of Thyself to the states and capacities of men; we praise and magnify Thy great mercy in thus condescending to our need.

We beseech Thee to enable us to attain to a true knowledge of Thee. Reveal Thyself in us, that we may be able to see Thee in heavenly light. Thou art the Eternal Jehovah, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. But though Thou art unchangeable in Thy own nature, yet Thou art variously seen by Thy creatures, according as they are related to Thee by likeness, or alienated from Thee by sin. Renew us in Thy Divine image and likeness, so that being loving, we may know Thee in Thy Divine love; being wise, we may know Thee in Thy Divine wisdom; being holy, we may know Thee in Thy Divine holiness.

O Thou Sun of righteousness, who dost arise with healing in Thy beams unto all who fear Thy Name, help us ever to bear in mind that "*the fear of the Lord is to hate evil,*" and that those only who thus fear Thee can by interior perception see Thee as

Thou art. Remove from us those clouds of falsity and evil which hide Thy face from us, intercepting the light of Thy Divine truth and the warmth of Thy Divine love, and making us barren and unfruitful in the true knowledge of Thee our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Make us faithful to the light we have, so that we may learn to know Thee better, to love Thee more truly, and to serve Thee with greater fidelity all our days. Thus may we grow in grace and in the knowledge of Thee until we attain finally to that blessed state when we shall see Thee no longer as through a glass darkly, but face to face; when we shall be with Thee where Thou art, and behold Thy glory. *Amen.*

HARMONY OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

"A just God and a Saviour."—*Isaiah* xlv. 21.

A TRUE knowledge of God is the most important, as it is also the highest, of all knowledge. He who truly knows God is wise, whatever knowledge else he lacks; he who knows not God is ignorant, whatever else he knows. As our idea of God enters into all the doctrines we believe, so error or ignorance in this fundamental of all faith darkens our perceptions of every other truth. Besides, man becomes assimilated to the object of his worship. What he worships he must reverence, and what he reverences he must imitate. He can himself rise no higher than his highest known standard of excellence, which is the idea he entertains of God. If his conceptions of the Divine attributes be degraded, he will inevitably sink to the same level of degradation. Unworthy ideas concerning God thus re-act injuriously on a man's moral character.

There is no subject on which men are more liable to err than in their conceptions of the nature of the Divine Justice. The ordinary notion of justice is

that of retribution—the bestowal of so much reward for so much service; the infliction of so much punishment for so much sin. Even the notion of justice *rewarding* has become somewhat obscured, by reason of the greater prominence which is given to the associated idea of justice *punishing*. The retributions of justice are thus commonly thought of as being almost exclusively penal—so much pain for so much transgression. Men transfer this idea, with the added notion of infinity, to their conception of the justice of God, and thence infer that the Divine justice is infinite, eternal, inexorable vindictiveness. Hence it has come to be believed that salvation is altogether of the Divine Mercy, and condemnation altogether of the Divine Justice. Thus there has grown up in the minds of many persons a habit of regarding these two Divine attributes, Justice and Mercy, as in themselves antagonistic and irreconcileable; and hence the supposed necessity of a plan of salvation so contrived as at once to satisfy the Divine Justice and to justify the Divine Mercy in behalf of those who are delivered from the wrath to come.

One thing, however, is certain—that no notion of Divine Justice can be true which does not fully harmonize with what we know of other attributes of God. The reality of the Divine Unity is at once destroyed if we conceive that any two attributes of God are in themselves irreconcileable. There can

be no infinite unity in a nature which at the same time embodies or contains two infinite contraries. God would be an infinite self-contradiction if two irreconcileable infinite attributes dwelt in Him. It must therefore be an error to suppose that the Divine Justice conflicts with the Divine Mercy, or that what satisfies one does not satisfy the other. There is no such contrariety in God; therefore any definition given to either His Justice or His Mercy which shows them to be essentially irreconcileable must be incorrect.

Justice in God is the right-doing of Infinite Love: it is the Love of God operating according to the immutable laws of His Divine order. His Love desires, His Wisdom contrives, and His Power executes nothing but what is for the real welfare of His creatures. It is therefore impossible that His Mercy could incline Him to do what His Justice forbids, or that any contrivance should be needed to reconcile these two attributes of His Divine Nature. "*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*" Yes! and for the reason that He is infinite in Love and infinite in Wisdom as well as infinite in Power; and because these are the trinity of essentials in His Divine unity which comprise all that He is in Himself, and all that He is to us. The only rational and sure basis of confidence in God is belief in the absolute harmony of the Divine attributes; that He is ever mercifully just and justly merciful towards the chil-

dren of men. Mercy ever desires and strives to save every human being, but only by a salvation which is in accordance with the immutable laws of Divine order, the end of which is the highest welfare of the individual and of the universe. The manifestation of the Divine love towards mankind must necessarily follow certain definite and immutable principles. These definite and immutable principles according to which God operates in human souls are the laws of Divine Justice. One of these laws is the preservation in every man of the power of free determination in regard to spiritual things; for if man does not freely receive the Divine blessings, they cannot be appropriated or really become his. God strives to enter into every soul, to fill man's affectional nature with love, his intellectual nature with wisdom, and his activities with new powers of doing good, and finding delight therein. To the extent that a man is willing for God thus to come in, He enters, and to that extent, according to the just laws of Divine operation, God blesses the man. If a man is not willing for God thus to come in, God's love, wisdom, and power cannot and do not enter into that man; and this, too, according to the just laws of Divine operation —and the state of that man is hell. Hence in God *justice is the rule of mercy,* the rule according to which it ever operates; so that we may say with the psalmist, "*Unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy:*

for Thou renderest to every man according to his work" (Ps. lxii. 12).

There is no contradiction to the harmony of the Divine attributes in the fact that Divine Justice provides for the punishment of sin. It is the highest mercy to punish the sinner whom nothing but punishment could restrain from wickedness. The more certainly that wickedness is disorder, and that disorder is productive of misery, the more certainly that obedience is order and that order is productive of happiness, the more certainly true it is that mercy must seem cruel to be kind. Punishment is not an end in itself; it is but a means to an end; and that end is altogether merciful. *Punishment which is merely vindictive, and without merciful ends in view, has no place in the Divine government.*

Even the punishments of hell are no exception to the operation of the Divine Mercy. The notion of hell as a place of arbitrary punishment eternally inflicted by an implacable Deity for *past* acts of wickedness committed during the sinner's life on earth, however apparently supported by the letter of Scripture, is utterly untenable. There is indeed punishment in hell, but it is such punishment for *present* acts of wickedness as is *repressive and restraining* only, and thus altogether merciful. God sends no one to hell; but all who go down to that world of death go there of their own choice, drawn to their associates in evil by the attraction of their

ruling loves. Those passages of Scripture which in the literal sense seem to assert that God commands the wicked to be cast into outer darkness and the tormenting flame, are accommodations of language to the natural ideas of men. In so far as it is a law of Divine order that in the other world, as indeed in this, men shall desire and strive to be with their like, and shall seek for, and prefer to abide with, such; in that sense God commands the consequence in instituting the law. But the law is merciful, both in its purpose and in its operation; for by virtue of this law all the associations of heaven are formed, and even in the associations of hell the lost spirit is less miserable than he would be in heaven. The suffering of the infernals is a dread reality, the necessary consequence of their disorderly and evil state; but the Divine mercy is present even in hell, operating through the inevitable law by which evil punishes itself, to restrain them from the excess of evil which would aggravate their misery. Fear of punishment is the only restraining motive in beings confirmed in evil; and the Divine mercy ever seeking to limit the raging of their lusts, and thus to save them from increase of suffering, uses that motive as the only means to this beneficent end.

PRAYER.

Almighty and everlasting God, who art good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all Thy

works; who, because Thou art merciful, wilt render unto every man according to his deeds: who by Thy Divine operation art ever seeking to impart to every man the highest good he is able to receive; who dost reign in heaven, to infill the angels with the joy and peace of Thy Love and Wisdom; and who dost rule even in hell, to restrain the lost from rushing into direr evils and bringing on themselves direr anguish; we adore Thee in the harmony of Thy Divine attributes as a Just God and a Saviour, ever mercifully just and justly merciful towards the children of men.

We thank Thee for that motive of love by which Thou dost draw us willingly unto Thee. We thank Thee also for the motive of fear by which in times past Thou hast restrained us from the commission of sin, and thus preserved us from the penalty of sin. By fear and love Thou hast led us hitherto, and in both Thou hast shown Thyself to be altogether just and merciful, wise and good. Henceforth lead us by the mighty cords of love—perfect love which casteth out fear. Enable us to see the true nature of evil, and to discern Thy mercy in those just laws of Divine order by which evil is permitted to work out its terrible consequences of misery and anguish in those that are enslaved thereby. Incline our hearts to shun all evil because it is a sin against Thee, and to do that which Thou wouldst have us to do because it is pleasing in Thy

sight. Thus may we fight the good fight of faith, till having been more than conquerors through Thee who hast loved us, we shall be exalted to Thy kingdom above, where we shall sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." *Amen.*

JUDGMENT AFTER DEATH.

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."—*Hebrews* ix. 27.

MUCH of the fear with which death is commonly regarded results from the absence of definite or clear views of what comes after death. It is viewed like—stepping out into the darkness; passing from the known to the unknown; the breaking up of associations and ties with which we are familiar, and many of which we have cherished, and the entrance into a condition of life appalling from its vagueness. Yet from such doubt and uncertainty the Word of God was intended to deliver us. By supplying to us many suggestive intimations, it at once justifies our desire for information and directs our investigations.

It is evidently a misapprehension to suppose that all men pass immediately by death either to heaven or to hell. In spiritual conjunction with this earth is an intermediate state, into which the soul just separated from the body first enters, and there for a while remains until its final entrance into a heavenly

or an infernal state. This intermediate state is called "*Sheol*" in the Old Testament, and "*Hades*" in the New Testament. Although both these terms have been occasionally translated "Hell," yet a thoughtful consideration of the passages in which they occur will show that the right meaning to be attached to both is, "the place of the departed." This intermediate state may very properly be designated "the world of spirits," to distinguish it from "Heaven" where the angels dwell, and from "Hell" where the infernals abide. Into this world of spirits all enter immediately upon the separation of those mysterious links which bind the spirit of man to his earthly tabernacle. In this world of spirits the judgment takes place, and from this intermediate state the soul that has been judged proceeds either to heaven or to hell, according to the fixity in good or evil resulting from its life on earth.

The judgment after death is not merely a judicial act by which every one is at once assigned his final abode, but it is a *process* of exploration and development by which the exteriors of the spirit are gradually brought into agreement with its interiors; by which the genuine internal character is brought forth to view; until the Lord's words are fully verified in each individual case: "*There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known*" (Luke xii. 2). The design of the judgment is thus to bring the externals of human

character into exact conformity or correspondence with the inner life; to abolish all artificial, assumed, and merely apparent distinctions among men; and to establish on the basis of internal and spiritual realities the conditions under which they will thenceforth exist, and the associates with whom they will thenceforth consort.

The Lord is truly the Author of this judgment: God is "*the Judge of all.*" The means by which this judgment is effected is an influx into the soul of the light of Divine Truth from the Lord, impelling every one to think, speak, and act under the influence of His ruling love, and thus revealing both to himself and others the true quality of his life. In this world every man is able more or less to conceal his real character, and in his words and actions to assume an exterior conformable to the laws of social order by which society is governed and preserved. The power of hiding from others our interior thoughts and feelings during our probation here, is a merciful arrangement of Divine providence; for it not only enables us to form a basis of natural goodness on which may be built the spiritual superstructure of a heavenly character, but it likewise permits the associations of this life to proceed in an external way of peace which would otherwise be impossible. If the light of Divine Truth from the Lord so shone into the minds of men in this world as to impel every one by word and deed to disclose his inner

thoughts and feelings to his fellow-men, abolishing thereby all those merely external restraints, courtesies, and attachments which now subsist, society would be dislocated. A new distribution of mankind would immediately ensue; those only who resembled each other in internal character would associate; the good would have fellowship only with the good, and the evil only with the evil. In such a case, instead of being as it now is a mixed state, a sort of common ground or mutual meeting-place, where both good and evil men can come into contact and maintain social and amicable intercourse with each other, the world would become a place where all the good were assembled in one part—*a heaven*, and where all the wicked were assembled in another part—*a hell*.

Just such a revelation of internal character, followed by just such a separation between the good and the evil, and effected by an influx into the soul of the light of Divine Truth from the Lord, takes place after death in that intermediate state which has been designated "the world of spirits." The external restraints by which in this life evil actions are repressed and order is outwardly maintained, there cease to act: and each soul stands self-revealed, openly delighting in what it really loves, glorying in the graces of the Lord, or glorying in its shame. The ruling love brought into activity assimilates all things to itself, and each soul gradu-

ally puts on an exterior which is the exact effigy or image of the inner man.

The judgment after death being thus a development of the ruling love, which by a law of man's spiritual nature gradually rejects everything uncongenial with itself, may therefore properly be termed a process of *vastation*. It operates on the inwardly good by the removal of external forms of falsity and evil which the best of men carry with them into the spiritual world; and it operates on the inwardly wicked by the removal of external forms of truth and goodness of which they were not entirely divested during their life on earth. Vastation effects no change in the radical character of the soul: it only *uncovers* the true character, by stripping off the disguises by which it was concealed, or the imperfections by which it was obscured. When this process is complete, each soul by the unerring law of spiritual affinity is drawn of its own will to that society in heaven or in hell which agrees with the real quality of its life.

This doctrine of the vastation, both of the good and the wicked in the world of spirits, must not be confounded with the Romish doctrine of purgatory, which teaches the efficacy of prayers for the dead, and of saying masses for the repose and deliverance of their souls. Vastation is an orderly process conducted by Divine Wisdom agreeably to the fixed laws of spiritual development; and there is no

sufficient Scripture evidence to justify the belief that by human mediation this process can be either alleviated or abridged.

PRAYER.

O Almighty Lord, who of Thy great goodness hast placed us here that we may be prepared for Thy heavenly kingdom, and who as the righteous Judge of all wilt search the heart and try the reins, to give to every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings; help us ever to bear in mind the solemn truth that "*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*"

Knowing that now is the accepted time and that now is the day of salvation, may we finish the work Thou hast given us to do, before the night cometh in which no man can work. Examine us, O Lord, and prove us; search us, and know our hearts; try us, and know our thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in us; and lead us in the way everlasting. Impressed by that word of Thine that "*there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known,*" may we take heed unto our ways. Purge out of us, good Lord, even in this world, as far as may be possible, all that Thy truth condemns, that we may not be ashamed to stand before Thee in judgment. To this end dispose and enable us to co-operate with Thy mercy by

shunning evil because it is sin against Thee, and doing good because it is well-pleasing in Thy sight. Work within us by Thy Spirit that our hearts may delight in goodness, that our minds may be enlightened by Thy truth, that our lives may be devoted to Thy service. So may we hope that when it shall please Thee to call us hence, we may give up our account with joy, and hear those words of final salvation pronounced, "*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*" Grant this, O Lord, for Thy great Name and mercies' sake. *Amen.*

LOVE TO GOD AND THE NEIGHBOUR.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—*Matthew* xxii. 37–39.

ST. John, the beloved apostle, says, "*We love Him because He first loved us*" (1 John iv. 19). Yet, love based chiefly on gratitude, though it may be necessary as a beginning, is not the full measure of the love we owe to God. Love to God, in its highest spiritual significance, is love to God for His Divine perfections—*the love of what God is.* We are to love God, not merely for His benefits towards us, but for His own sake—for the sake of those love-worthy qualities which constitute His Divine character. Hence, *genuine love to God is the love of goodness and truth;* for these in their essence and origin are Himself. Whoever loves goodness and truth, loves God; and he loves God just in the degree and manner in which he loves goodness and truth. And the command to love God above all things is equivalent to this—that man's love for what is good and true must be the great controlling principle of his life.

Love to God, in this sense, has a necessary ten-

dency to conform us to the image of God. True love, based on appreciation of character, is *imitative;* it seeks to resemble its object. Love is the most formative thing in the world, the most powerful in removing what is uncongenial to its nature, and in assimilating all things to itself. By loving goodness we increase in goodness; by loving wisdom we increase in wisdom; by loving holiness we increase in holiness—by loving these as qualities in God, we become like God. This shows man's duty to love God to be most important; for it is no other indeed than formative of his own character in the image and likeness of God.

"*This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" These two loves are connected necessarily and not arbitrarily. We cannot truly love God without loving man; and we cannot truly love man without having our hearts open to the love of God. Hence the apostle says, "*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar*" (1 John iv. 20); and "*If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us*" (1 John iv. 12).

But here an important distinction must be made. True love, in whomsoever it exists, and however varying in its formal character, is essentially the same; *it is no other than God's own life of love received into human hearts.* Man has no independ-

ent life, but is a spiritual organism, every moment receptive of life from God, and not only of life from God, but of the very life of God Himself. Man is loving, only as he is animated by the Divine love; wise, only as he is informed by the Divine wisdom; holy, only as he is a partaker of the Divine holiness. But although true love in itself is one and the same, yet in regard to its objects and the modes of its manifestation it admits of a twofold distinction, viz., as a love of *complacency or delight*, and as a love of *benevolence or goodwill*. Of these two forms of love, the love of benevolence is due to all mankind; but the love of complacency is, by its very nature, confined to the true disciples of the Lord. We not only wish them well, as we do the ungodly, but we see in them qualities which claim and deserve our affection and esteem.

Now there can be no doubt that the love of complacency which we feel for the true children of God, as such, springs necessarily from love to God. We love God because He is worthy of our love, and we love our Christian brethren because they are like God; or rather, so far as they are partakers of the Divine goodness, wisdom, and holiness, we love God in them.

But it is equally true that the love of benevolence, which embraces all men without exception, springs necessarily from love to God. For love to God not

only makes us like God, and therefore, as He is, loving unto every man; but *those who truly love God, receive the life of God's own love into their hearts;* and this love, whether originally in God or derivatively in God's true children, is a love that embraces all. Like God, who loves all, we too, if "*partakers of the Divine nature,*" shall love all men, even as we love ourselves.

Our love of benevolence to man should not be merely "for God's sake," as some teach. Does God for His own sake love man? The thought is so at variance with the Divine character as to seem almost blasphemy; it makes the all-loving Lord an infinite self-love. God loves man for man's own sake; for the sake of what He can do for man, give to man, bless man with. But if we become partakers of God's own love, and grow like God, we too shall love man for his own sake, for the sake of the help we can render to man, the blessings or the comfort we can aid man in receiving. Of course, in this ministry of love to man, the joy attendant on the exercise of benevolent affections will be ours; but this thought must not be present with us as a motive, or it will impart a selfish quality to our actions, and deprive us of the joy we seek. To do good to others, for the sake of the happiness it will bring to us, is not really to love our neighbour, but ourselves alone. Hence we are taught to "*do good, hoping for nothing again.*"

Love to God and the neighbour, if genuine, will be fruitful in good works. True love is not a mere sentiment—an idle, dreamy, contemplative thing. It must be up and doing. The Divine love is unceasingly active. It required the existence of other beings who might be the objects and recipients of this love. So, too, the love of God and the neighbour kindled in the human soul, will seek avenues of expression: *If we love God, we shall keep His commandments* (John xiv. 21); *if we love man, we shall seek to do good to man* (1 John iii. 18).

Our sense of the necessity and importance of these loves will be enhanced by the consideration that they are intended to be eternal in their duration. They are not only useful in this life to ourselves and our fellow-men, but they are the very life of angels and our meetness for the heavenly world.

It is then a most momentous question—How may these loves, so essential not only to our welfare here, but to our happiness hereafter, be obtained? Although there are many difficulties connected with the mode and conditions of man's reception of life from God, yet we are not without a practical answer to this question which all may understand and act upon. The Lord Himself is continually in the desire and endeavour to communicate to man the life of His own love. The actual communication of this life is limited, not by the Lord's willingness to

impart, but by man's capacity to receive. It is a law of man's own nature that he is receptive of good affections from the Lord only so far as their opposites are removed. The Lord alone is able to remove man's evil loves; but He can do this only so far as man in freedom resists them in himself, and abstains from evil actions as sins against the Lord. In proportion then as a man from this motive mortifies his selfish and worldly loves, ever looking to the Lord for help, the love of God and the neighbour will be shed abroad in his heart and be manifested in his words and deeds.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, the Fountain of life, and the Giver of every good and perfect gift, we praise Thee for all Thy mercies, temporal and spiritual; for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for Thy boundless love in having formed us with capacities for the reception of Thy love and wisdom, and thus for becoming images and likenesses of Thyself.

Inspire us with gratitude for all Thy many mercies, yet raise our hearts above this the beginning and foundation of love. Enable us to see Thee as Thou art, in the loveliness of Thine own nature, so that enamoured of Thy Divine perfections, we may love Thee for Thine own sake. May we be willing, for Thy sake and for the sake of

Thy gospel, to lay down our old life of selfish and worldly loves, that we may receive from Thee the new life of love to Thee and love to our neighbour. Give us grace to show forth our love to Thee, not only with our lips, but also in our lives; ever bearing in mind that if a man love Thee he will keep Thy commandments. Help us to love one another with a pure heart fervently, not in word only but in deed and in truth; for hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Thee. And as Thou, Lord, lovest others for their sakes, and desirest to be one with them, and to make them happy from Thyself, so make our love to others resemble Thine.

Thus, being rooted and grounded in love, may we be prepared to dwell with Thee in the happy regions of love and peace in Thy heavenly and eternal kingdom. *Amen.*

THE LORD'S GLORIFICATION THE PATTERN AND THE EFFICIENT CAUSE OF MAN'S REGENERATION.

"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."—*Hebrews* v. 8, 9.

THE great fundamental doctrine of the New Testament is this:—In order to redeem and save mankind, God took upon Himself a human nature which was born of the virgin Mary; through victories in temptation, this human nature became more and more fully One with the Divine Nature; until, perfected through sufferings, it was filled with all the fulness of the Godhead, and exalted far above all heavens to be the everlasting medium of Divine influences to angels and to men.

This process, by which the human nature of Christ was made One with the Divine Nature which dwelt within it, is termed the *glorification* of Christ. It consisted in the opening of His human capacities, by the continuous removal of all inherited conditions that could limit or resist the influx of the Divine life; and in the continuous descent of the fulness of

the Godhead, from the inmost even to the ultimates of the perfected humanity, until the human consciousness became altogether One with the Divine. The real operator was God, working within the human nature in which He was incarnate; for Jesus received continually from the Divine Father, who dwelt within Him, the power both to will and to do. Thus our Lord says, "*Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works*" (John xiv. 10). It is true that the fundamental union of the Godhead with the Manhood in the Person of Christ was effected by the incarnation; but by the process of glorification the union became *reciprocal*, embracing both the consciousness of Christ as God, and the consciousness of Christ as man.

The human nature of Christ was progressively glorified, through victories in temptation: "*For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted*" (Heb. ii. 10, 18). The life of the Lord on earth was a continual temptation and a continual victory. By most grievous conflicts with the powers of darkness, the last of which was the passion of the cross, He

reduced all things in Himself to Divine order; removing successively all those hereditary conditions which rendered Him accessible to temptation, and limited or resisted the influx of the Divine life. Hence, after His ascension, the Lord Jesus said, "*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*" (Rev. i. 8); thereby asserting that the union of the Godhead and the Manhood in His glorious Person was complete. Thenceforth God in His glorified humanity was to be the sole object of worship; not God only, as before the incarnation, but *God in Christ*, the Father in the Son.

The glorification of the Lord's human nature is the *pattern* of man's regeneration. For

(1) The means are the same—viz., the achieving of victories over all evil, assailing Him and us in the form of temptation.

(2) The operator is the same—viz., God, working in us, as in the human nature of Christ, both to will and to do.

(3) The mode is the same—viz., the opening of the capacities of His human nature and ours to the influx of the Divine life.

(4) The result is the same—that is, the same in kind, though differing in degree; we being finite recipients of the Divine fulness which dwells infinitely in Him.

Thus Christ is truly "*the Captain of our salvation,*" in whose steps we have to walk. As He had to be "*made perfect through sufferings*" before He could "*enter into His glory,*" so we must "*suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.*" And to all who are toiling after Him in the strait and steep and rugged pathway of regeneration, He says, "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne*" (Rev. iii. 21).

The Lord's glorification is not only the pattern, but *the efficient cause* of man's regeneration.

Prior to the incarnation, the influx of Divine life to man was mediately through the heavens. God imparted His Divine gifts through the instrumentality of angels who were in spiritual conjunction with mankind. But as succeeding generations of men grew more and more corrupt, this conjunction became less intimate and less general. At length the world became so depraved that, with the exception of "*a very small remnant,*" conjunction with the heavens could no longer be maintained. The powers of hell had risen to such a height that they were taking possession not only of the souls but also of the bodies of men. Universal destruction was imminent; "*the fulness of the time was come;*" it was the great, the tremendous crisis in the history of mankind. Then it was, when the whole human

race was in danger of perishing, that God became incarnate. In the person of "*the man Christ Jesus,*" He met and conquered the infernal powers; reduced to order the world of spirits, by judgment on all who had gathered there since the days of Noah; and having glorified His humanity, He thereby made it *a new medium* by which He could reach men in their degraded condition, and operate upon them by influx adapted to their state. Through this new medium—the glorified humanity of Jesus Christ—as His great instrument of power, the Lord now subdues and rules the hells, preserves and arranges the heavens, sustains and governs the universe, and sheds down continually His life-giving influences on mankind.

The end for which the human nature of Christ was "*made perfect*" was, that He might become "*the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.*"

Obedience, in its full significance, is *the devotion of the whole man to the service of God.* It therefore includes—the obedience of the affectional faculties, which is *love;* the obedience of the intellectual faculties, which is *faith;* and the obedience of the operative faculties, which is *good works.* And to those who thus obey Him, Christ is "*the Author of eternal salvation,*" not by an arbitrary condition, but by a necessary law. *For obedience, thus rendered, opens man's threefold nature to the reception of life*

from the Lord—the affectional faculties to the influx of Divine Love, the intellectual faculties to the influx of Divine Wisdom, and the operative faculties to the influx of Divine Power. And it is by this communication of life from the Lord, according to the capacity of reception, that man is regenerated on earth, and made meet for the services and joys of heaven.

This doctrine of the Lord's glorification and its consequences to mankind, is identical with what is sometimes called the doctrine of the "*Atonement.*"

For in Christ, as the representative man, human nature was made *at-one* with the Divine nature, through sufferings and death; in order that we, through fellowship with His sufferings and conformity to His death, might be made *at-one* with God from whom we were separated by sin. Christ's atoning work is not the moving cause, but the expression of the Divine benevolence towards man. It is not a contrivance to reconcile conflicting attributes, or to propitiate an angry God, but a scheme originated by Divine Love, planned by Divine Wisdom, and executed by Divine Power, to bring back into union with the All-loving Father those "*that were alienated, and enemies in their mind by wicked works*" (Col. i. 21).

PRAYER.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art the eternal God, the Creator and Preserver of mankind, the Redeemer and Saviour of Thy people, the Giver of all spiritual grace, and the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Thee. We, Thy unworthy servants, desire to praise Thee for all the manifestations of Thy goodness towards us. But above all, we bless Thy holy Name that Thou didst descend on earth in man's nature, and by victories in temptation didst glorify Thy humanity, thereby making it a new medium through which we may approach Thy Divine Majesty, and receive out of Thy fulness grace according to our needs.

May we prove that we are Thy disciples by taking up our cross daily, and crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. And as Thy humanity was made perfect through sufferings, so may we in faith and patience follow Thee in the path Thou hast trod before us, knowing that if we suffer with Thee we shall be also glorified with Thee.

Thou, O Lord, wast exalted far above all heavens that Thou mightest fill all things. May we receive such an abundant influx of life from Thee as may enable us to resist and overcome the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; to live as Thy redeemed people; and to walk in all Thy commandments and ordinances blameless.

Thus, following Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, and receiving of Thy Spirit, may we find in Thee strength and righteousness, consolation and joy, and all the blessings of salvation. *Amen.*

necessarily follow. All things are Divine in their origin, because they are produced from God by God; but the very act of putting them forth *from Himself* makes them cease to be continuous with God, and therefore makes them not Divine. There are three discrete degrees of substance, viz. the Divine, the Spiritual, and the Natural—the substance of God Himself; the substance of the souls of men and of the spiritual world; and the substance of the natural universe and of all things therein. In the order of creation, the natural was discreted from the spiritual, and the spiritual from the Divine. The Divine can act upon or into the spiritual; and the spiritual can act upon or into the natural; but by no process of transmutation or refinement can the natural become the spiritual, or the spiritual become the Divine. By this doctrine of discrete degrees of substance we avoid the fundamental error of Pantheism, while adopting the great truth which it so imperfectly expresses. The Creator is not confounded with the creation, for the substance of the universe is not continuous with God. Yet God is truly the original and all pervading life—He animating the spiritual degree of substance, which is the indwelling and actuating principle of all material things.

Granting that this is the order of creation, it follows that, while God is the First Great Cause of all things that exist, *the spiritual world exists in the*

natural world as a cause in its effect. The spiritual world is a world of mediate causes acting in the natural world, but deriving all its power from the First Great Cause, from whom it originated, and by whom it continually subsists. Matter itself, the ultimate created substance, is dead and inert; and all forces by which its inertia is overcome, and all the active properties which it seems to possess have a spiritual origin. *All natural objects exist from and are actuated by corresponding spiritual essences, to which they stand related as the body of a man to his soul.* Hence all things in the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms of nature have their antitypes in the spiritual world, substantial spiritual entities corresponding in all particulars of organization with their material types.

This doctrine of influx from the spiritual world accounts for the existence of inverted or disorderly creations in the material universe. None of the noxious things that exist on this earth were created in the beginning by the Lord, but all are from hell. For, by the law of spiritual causation, the affections and thoughts of the inhabitants of the spiritual world give birth to corresponding spiritual creations which form the objects and scenery of their external sphere. It is by the action of this beneficent law that the members of each heavenly society are surrounded by the spiritual essences of those beautiful and useful objects in the animal, vegetable, and

mineral kingdoms which are in harmony with their mental and moral states. But the same law of spiritual causation prevails equally in hell, where, consequently, the inhabitants of each infernal society see their falsities and evils projected into corresponding external objects which are inversions of the orderly creations of the heavenly world. These spiritual inversions flowing into the world of nature come embodied in material substance and originate the various types of animals, vegetables, and minerals injurious to man.

God is the Preserver as well as the first Creator of all things. The universe once created has no self-sustaining power, but is dependent on its Creator for continued existence. The natural creation subsists from the spiritual, but all things in the spiritual world are preserved in being by the unceasing efflux of life from God. Relatively to natural things, spiritual essences are living; but relatively to God, both spiritual and natural things are dead. Only by the inflowing of life from God, and that from moment to moment, are either the spiritual essences or their material forms preserved in being and enabled to fulfil the purposes of their existence.

Contemplating these truths, it may well be said that creation declares the glory of God. All nature in its orderly forms is a transcript of the Divine mind, a mirror in which we may see the Divine per-

fections revealed, a series of ultimate images whose antitypes exist in heaven, and whose archetypes are the thoughts of Deity. Having come forth from God, and being sustained by the life-giving presence of God who dwells in the inmost of everything, all created things may lift the soul to the contemplation of their Creator and Preserver, and help us to form a more worthy conception of His all-embracing Love, His infinite Wisdom, and His Almighty Power.

PRAYER.

O God, whose Name is excellent in all the earth, and whose glory is above the heavens; we bow before Thy excellent Majesty with reverence and godly fear. Thou, even Thou art Lord alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and Thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee. Thine infinite love desired the existence of creatures on whom Thou mightest bestow the bounties of Thy goodness. Thou hast created us to bear Thine own image and likeness by the reception of Thy love and wisdom, and Thou hast placed us for a while on earth, that we may be prepared to dwell with Thee eternally in the heavens. Help us ever to bear in mind Thy loving purpose concerning us, and to press toward the mark of the prize of our high calling.

When we look round on the glorious scenes of creation, give unto us to perceive in them the evidences of Thy eternal power and Godhead. Let natural things be unto us a mirror in which spiritual things are reflected. Enable us to discern in creation the image of its Divine Creator, to see in all its orderly forms the transcripts of Thy love and wisdom, reminding us of Thy presence, and lifting up our minds to the adoring contemplation of Thyself. And when we look upon those disorderly and evil things which deface Thy glorious creation, may we humble ourselves in Thy sight, O Lord, and feel what an evil and a bitter thing it is to sin against Thee.

O Thou who didst cause the light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts; raise us out of the ruin and degradation of our fallen state; and renew us in Thine image and likeness in this life, that in the world to come we may have life everlasting. *Amen.*

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